Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

APRIL

94

RPGA® NETWORK

©1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Notes From HQ

Scoring A Big Zero

The RPGA® Network is feeding a polar bear at the Milwaukee County Zoo! Well, Network members aren't walking in the cage and handing him fresh fish, we're helping cover the cost of feeding him.

Thanks to the many members who participated in the WINTER FANTASY™ Convention Benefit AD&D® game tournament and charity auction, we raised more than $1,000 for the Zoological Society Animal Sponsor Program.

That was enough money for the Network to be listed as the sole sponsor for Zero, a truly massive polar bear who resides in a big enclosure complete with a deep pool. We even had enough money left over to sponsor a rockhopper penguin. We were tickled. We wanted to sponsor a polar bear last year, but we couldn't raise enough money. Polar bears cost a lot to feed, and therefore cost a lot to sponsor.

Robin Higgins of the Zoological Society was on hand at the convention to explain the sponsorship program and how helping one zoo in Milwaukee is good for the entire country. The Milwaukee Zoo has a commitment to provide the best possible environment for all the animals housed there. The zoo also lends animals to other zoos in the United States and teaches the public about various animals through scheduled lectures and demonstrations.

Higgins explained it is expensive to sponsor zoo animals because it is very costly to feed them. In one week, the zoo's animals eat 729 bananas, 1,141 carrots, 356 heads of lettuce, and hundreds of pounds of seeds, raw meat, fish, and pelleted food.

The RPGA Network received a Certificate of Sponsorship, information about Zero and the penguin, and its name on the zoo's "All in the Family" recognition board.

Thanks to everyone for participating and making it possible for us to sponsor Zero. Let's hope we can continue our efforts at next year's convention and make Zero a tradition.

The WINTER FANTASY Benefit event was "The Trouble With Sara" by R. Derrek Pattison, a one-round RAVENLOFT® setting tournament that kept the players on their toes. The convention was filled with different worlds—the DRAGONLANCE® setting, AMAZING ENGINE™ BUGHUNTERS™ game, Ravens Bluff, and the AD&D game Viking realm

All things considered—and despite the many inches of snow that was dumped in the Midwest—WINTER FANTASY was a rousing success this year. Just take a read through Paul Culotta's article in this issue to see a gamer's perspective of the convention.

We offered a myriad of Network events, board games, miniature events, family favorites, and more. There were trophies and ribbons for the winners. The Milwaukee Area Commodore Enthusiasts brought up a bank of Commodores and manned a room full of non-stop arcade and computer game action. There was something for nearly everyone. The attendees seemed to have a great time, and the convention staff even got to enjoy a game or two during the hectic three days.

Special thanks go to our staffers who worked tirelessly to make sure everyone found games and kept busy. Ed and Nancy Besowshek expertly ran the registration desk, with the help of HMGS President Jeff Hammerlund, who also ran several miniature events. The events were marshaled by Bill Corey, Scott Douglas, and Marshal Simpson, and all the on-site paperwork, troubleshooting, and HQ duties were handled by eastcoasters Dave Baker, Willi Burger, Tony Dentamaro, Albert Gay, Clint Heilman, Al Lombardi, Carl Longley, Bob Persons, Carol Robinson, Dave Samuels, and Wayne Straiton. The Parkside Area Wargamers ran our ever-busy silent auction. And the Hyatt staff was wonderful. We'll do it again next year—in February this time. We've got more convention space reserved, and we'll have a list of Network events you can sign up for ready this summer.

The "Oops" Drawer

In issue #90 we ran the winners of club contest for magical items. Art Lobdell called us soon after to point out we mistakenly listed the author of the *rod of equestrians* as Nigel Wallis when, in fact, it was Art who wrote the entry. We apologize to both Art and Nigel for the mistake.

Take Care,

Jean

❑

POLYHEDRON® Newszine (the official newsletter of TSR Inc.'s ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published monthly by TSR, Inc. The mailing address for all correspondence is: P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Telephone: (414)248-3625.

POLYHEDRON Newszine is mailed free to all RPGA® Network members. Membership rates for the US, Canada, and Mexico are $25 per year; foreign rates are $45 per year (air mail). All prices are subject to change without notice. Changes of address for the delivery of membership materials must be received at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change to ensure uninterrupted delivery.

POLYHEDRON Newszine welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork that are accompanied by our Standard Disclosure Form. No responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. No submission will be returned unless it is also accompanied by a self-adressed, stamped envelope of sufficient size.

Unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication, materials submitted to the publisher for publication in POLYHEDRON Newszine are accepted solely upon the condition that the materials may be edited and published in POLYHEDRON Newszine or used in RPGA® Network sanctioned tournaments, conventions and events without cost to the publisher. TSR and the RPGA Network shall make no other use of the materials unless TSR and the author or artist enter into a written agreement regarding such use.

TSR grants to prospective authors a non-exclusive right to use copyrighted materials of TSR in their submissions to TSR. An author, however, shall have no right to publish or to permit someone other than TSR to publish a submission that includes any copyrighted materials of TSR without first obtaining the written permission of TSR to do so.

All letters addressed to the RPGA Network or to TSR, Inc., will be considered as submissions and may be printed in whole or in part at the discretion of the editor unless the sender specifically requests otherwise in writing.

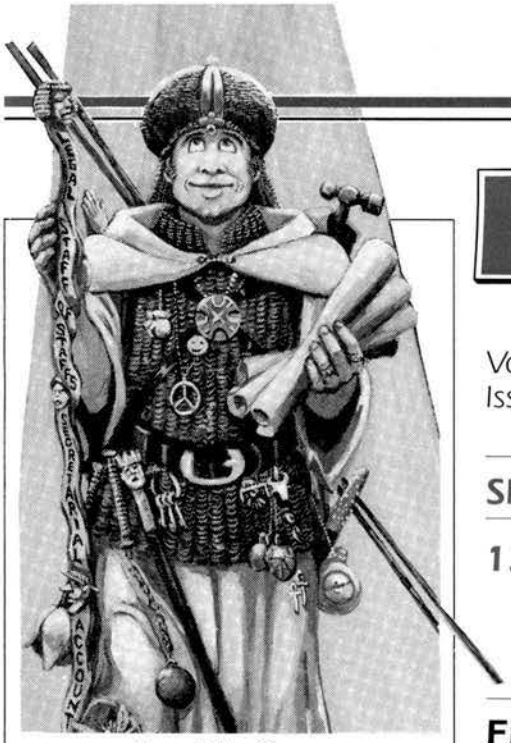
Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed in POLYHEDRON Newszine are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of TSR, Inc., the RPGA Network, or its staff.

Standard Disclosure Forms, POLYHEDRON Writing Guidelines, Tournament Request Forms, Membership Forms, Club Forms, and Classified Ad Forms are available from Network HQ.

® designates registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.
™ designates trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

Most other product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

©1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



About the Cover

George Vrbanic sent us two dramatically different versions of the heroic priest. Considering the month, we had to share this "complete priest" with you.

Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

Volume 14, Number 4
Issue #94, April, 1994

SPECIAL FEATURE

12 **The Cult of Ao — by Stephen E. Schend**
Since the Time of Troubles, one especially troublesome cult has appeared to maintain the divine Balance in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting.

FEATURES

6 **The Luminous Bantha — by Bill Slavicsek and Michelle Carter**
At the vital Crystal Web Station, intrigue and diplomacy set the tone for adventure!

18 **Sidekicks — Contest Winners**
A trio of clever NPCs to pair with your player characters in any setting.

22 **Fantastic Memories — by Paul F. Culotta**
A first visit to the WINTER FANTASY™ gaming convention leaves some lasting impressions.

EDITORIAL

2 **Notes From HQ — by Jean Rabe**
All the Benefit tournament yields is . . . Zero?

DEPARTMENTS

4 **The Everwinking Eye — by Ed Greenwood**
Elminster has something other than a wink for Sembia, land of merchants and schemers.

15 **The Living Galaxy — by Roger Moore**
More advice for running one-on-one adventures, this time starting with the villain.

20 **The Living City — by Lee Sheppard**
Learn to fence, or improve your skill at Myriad's Fencing School.

24 **Into The Dark — by James Lowder**
Our reviewer warns of a few bad seeds.

Publisher
Rick Behling

Editor
Jean Rabe

Associate Editor
Dave Gross

Graphic Director
Larry Smith

Production Staff
Paul Hanchette
Tracey Isler
Kevin Melka

Subscriptions
Charmaine Snyder

If your mailing label reads
"Exp 4.94"
this is your last issue.
Renew today!

©1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Elminster's Everwinking Eye

Land of Merchants

Ed Greenwood

Sembia? Grand, proud pinnacle of civilization and riches? Bah! Nest of mother-killing vipers, more like.
Like me? Well, aye; I was born there.

Mairkulth Sharond, master of The Witch of the Winds caravel, said to one of his crew
Year of the Wyvern

The rich, bustling Land of Merchants is an ever-changing cauldron of entrepreneurs, wheeling and dealing busily night and day. It is a mobile society of fads and factions whose customs and faces change rapidly.

How Sembites Are Seen By Their Neighbors

Most Dalesfolk regard Sembians as "perfumed schemers" who are arrogant, habitual liars, untrustworthy in all dealings even with their families, lovers, friends, and business partners. The stereotypical Sembian merchant they lampoon in taverns and around their hearth fires is gaudily overdressed, unable to tell the truth even about his own name or the state of the weather, and throws money at anything and everything in a desperate attempt to manipulate or impress others. On stage, comic actors portray Sembians with four ever-present elements: many-feathered, ridiculous hats (affairs crowded with model ships are a favorite); chains of linked oversize gold coins worn around the neck to cover the chest with clanking metal; clusters of large, ugly rings set with false gemstones and worn on every visible finger, thumb, and toe (usually at least three per digit); and a haughty "look down the nose" manner, with pompous voice and sneer to match.

Every stereotype is exaggerated, but these characteristics are found in many Sembians—as is the habit of wearing strong ("reeking" is the term most Dalesfolk or Cormyreans would use) scents. Often several different ("clashing" is a word often applied by the unfriendly) perfumes are applied to the same body at once. An old Dragonreach joke says that a Sembian uses perfume to hide the stink of his unwashed body—and he doesn't bathe because he can't make any money while doing so.

The Doings of Sembites, and The Scrutiny of Elminster

The schemes and doings of these charming folk are watched carefully by those with professional interest—such as the rulers of all nearby Dales, the Zhentarim, the folk of Hillsfar, and the inhabitants of Dragon Coast ports and Cormyr.

Most people of the Realms look upon Sembians primarily as a source of money—Sembians are always dabbling in investments here and there, hoping to gain an edge over rivals at home. And they often strike riches where only modest returns were expected. They're seldom around to administer their wealth, so these "outside Sembia" concerns seldom bear rich fruit (the Sembian sponsors are often cheated, or "short-coined," by their local business partners).

Many inventors, artists, musicians, and dreamers of various sorts (such as bastard offspring who want someday to seize power in the land or city they regard as rightfully their own, or folk outcast from various guilds and organizations that they'd like to reform—with themselves back in favor, of course) come to Sembia to take advantage of the wealth that's thrown around. Outside Waterdeep and Amn, there are few places in Faerun where citizens have the necessary coins and the freedom and desire to sponsor others. Mages whose experiments deal with ships that sail the skies, flying castles, and other large-scale projects tend to dwell in Sembia. Thus, Elminster has many friends, foes, contacts, and acquaintances in The Land Below The Dales (an old cartographers' term for Sembia, popular in the Dales, where "Below" is equated with "morally, sensibly, and aesthetically beneath").

Elminster tends to have as little contact with Sembia and Sembians as possible, but that doesn't mean he doesn't set foot in it at least about every 20 days or so, because Sembia is one of the best places in all of Faerun to hide (among the busy masses of self-interested, mobile, always-active people), and Elminster's work (tirelessly manipulating and influencing the Realms to suit his own tastes and aims) often brings him onto the trail of folk who wish to be hidden. Many of these come to Sembia.

The News

Ordinarily, Elminster has little to say of Sembites (or "Semmites," as Southerners say; either term is correct). Recently, however, he reported deeds of interest to all in the Heartlands of Faerun: a merchant war of sorts, brewing in Sembia.

It seems that one Aelduth, a dealer in antique armors and "tomb-scents" (a current fad among the most noble and haughtily wealthy: rare musks and perfumes whose making is now forgotten, plundered from the tombs of fallen realms—such as Netheril), has allied himself with Thayan agents or interests. They want slaves and magic. Aelduth employs agents to seize both by stealth. In return, his allies are willing to pay handsomely in gold and forbidden intoxicants. Aelduth has been hiring all the human dregs he can find on the coasts of The Sea of Fallen Stars: mercenaries, thieves, and killers-for-hire of all sorts who are down on their luck or on the run.

This gathering of strength has not gone unnoticed, and Aelduth's rivals have fearfully begun assembling private armies of their own. This in turn has alarmed and annoyed the nobles, The Cult of the Dragon, and various wizards, who don't like the idea of private armies at work in Sembia (unless such shadowy forces be under their own command). Some of Aelduth's outlaws have been attacked by rivals and foes of their own, and things have begun to escalate. First it was knife-work in alleys, and now it's come to pitched battles when caravans are ambushed—then turn out to be full of a concealed cargo of ready warriors, expecting such trouble.

There have been bloodied blades at Ornstar (a tiny hamlet southwest of Ordulin), at Griffonfang Bridge on the main road east of Daerlun, and in the warehouses of Selgaunt on three occasions. The last of the Selgauntan skirmishes drew in mages of considerable power, and much damage was done. (In many high-rent cities in Faerun, wizards not given to dangerous experimentation can rent lodging space very cheaply in some warehouses, in return for "backing up" the warehouse guardsmen with their spells.)

Various nobles and talkative visiting merchants got wind of the struggle after the warehouse spell battle and the fires that followed, and the news has spread quickly. The various rival merchant concerns are lying low now, as senior Sembians try to learn just who was fighting and why—and if the rumors of Thayan involvement and slave-trading are true.

The usual exaggerated rumors have accompanied this news: that drow or illithid slavers from the nearby Underdark are behind the attacks, as they prepare to invade Sembia "from below"; or that warring pirate factions have enlisted powerful wizards (or worse) from Vaasa, Thay, or other planes; or that the whole thing has been arranged by various senior merchant nobles of the realm so that they can slay rivals and seize or destroy their goods under the guise of "battling the foul slave-trading foes of Sembia."

Elminster has investigative resources unavailable to most, and has learned rather more than most folk. According to his latest researches, the chief combatants are as follows:

Aelduth, leader of the aggressive faction that began the current troubles, is probably only a NE hm W4, but with his feeble magics bolstered by several magical items, including a ewer out of which he has released a marid who must serve him for 1,001 days; for details of the ewer, see Genie Prisons in the "Fortunes and Fates" booklet of the AL-QADIM® *Land of Fate* boxed set; for details of the marid, see the *Monstrous Manual*, "Genie."

Aelduth commands a few enchanted creatures—gargoyles, baneguards, and the like, Elminster presumes, though details are sketchy—and has a dozen or so human adventurers of experience (LE thieves and fighters of 5th-8th level) who are personally loyal to him. He has more than a hundred hirelings ("outlaw scum" for the most part, but with a few skilled guards, sailors and merchants among them), and Thayan support of unknown strength (likely to be contacts, money, and magical supplies rather than "hands or mages to fight for him," Elminster believes).

The rivals of Aelduth who've moved most openly to do battle with him include the sea captain Syndlorn; the professional killer Fanaeth Torlsar (thought by some to be working at the behest of a cabal of fearful Selgauntan merchants, manipulated in turn by The Cult of the Dragon); and Landivarr Telnstone, a mage with a personal grudge against Aelduth.

Breldar Syndlorn was once only a minor pirate captain raiding the coast of Chessenta and along the Vilhon, carefully avoiding tough fights—and the richest prizes, where defenses were strong and competition from other pirates likely. Falling in with an unnamed ally in Westgate, Syndlorn became the owner of a six-ship fleet of fast, heavily-armed caravels known among some pirates as "reavers" for their powerful ballistae armament. Syndlorn is a LE hm T6 (dual class: formerly F9).

Fanaeth Torlsar is a CE hm T14, a loner who is a master of poisons (he is said to have dosed himself repeatedly until immune to the effects of most known poisons and venoms) and favors the use of darts in battle—including some magical darts, such as *darts of blinding, silencing, stunning,* and *vapors* (all detailed in FOR2/Drow of the Underdark). He does employ hirelings (often as unwitting "dupes," whose instructions cause them to play fools' roles in arranged ambushes and disasters), and has recently built up a small, highly-trained band of assistants (a dozen or so, perhaps sixteen at most, all of them agile and acrobatic thieves), perhaps in preparation for this "Merchant War."

Landivarr Telnstone is a mage of Saerloon, thought to be acting alone in the Merchant War out of a personal hatred of Aelduth or to win a reputation for himself (and future alliances with Sembian merchants of rising fortunes and increasing needs for protection). He wields an improved *lightning bolt* spell that can be shaped as the caster wills, rather than arcing from metal to metal or proceeding in straight bolts with possible harm to the caster or allies. This 5th level wizard spell, *lightning lash,* is rare in the Realms, and many mages are trying to purchase its secrets from Telnstone; some wizards think he's seized an opportunity to show it off in combat to increase the demand.

Lightning Lash

(Evocation)
Level: 5
Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V,S,M
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: 1/2

A wizard casting this spell unleashes a discharge of electrical energy that inflicts 1d6 points of damage per level of the caster (to a maximum of 12d6). A successful saving throw vs. spells reduces this damage to half (round fractions down).

The discharge appears in a shape or arc whose precise location and direction is as visualized by the caster (it is instantaneous, so the caster can't move or "redirect" it to strike a moving or unforeseen foe). If solid barriers, such as stone walls, prevent the lash from fully forming as desired, it rebounds "within itself" (hence its name), affecting only the area in which it was directed to form (creatures in this area must save twice, but don't take double damage; to suffer only half damage, both throws must succeed).

The lash can set combustible materials aflame, sunder wooden doors (blasting away one inch of thickness per level of the caster, to a maximum of one foot), splinter stone up to six inches thick (a half inch per caster level), and melt metals with low melting points (such as bronze, copper, gold, lead, and silver). Item saving throws must be made to determine if stone shatters, metal melts, or other objects struck by the lash are affected. If a barrier shatters (its save fails), the lash can continue into the area beyond the barrier with full effects—if it was cast to do so).

This spell is often used to melt locks, ruin armor, or seal metal doors shut without harming nearby valuables. Such precision in casting requires practice.

❑

The Luminous Bantha

Adventures for the *Star Wars: New Republic Campaign*

by Bill Slavicsek and Michele Carter

Last time out, we presented a base of operations for *Star Wars* campaigns set after the events in the film, *Return of the Jedi*. On the fringe of an ion storm, in a section of deep space far from civilized regions, waits the Crystal Web Space Station. This location is important because of the three hyperspace trade lanes that pass by here—and because of the jump points clustered here that make travel quicker and more direct.

The information presented here is for use with *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game Second Edition* from West End Games. While the details could be altered to fit any science fiction game setting, they work best in the *Star Wars* galaxy as defined in the movies, novels, comics, and existing RPG products.

A Few More Thoughts on Crystal Web

Adventures that take place on the Crystal Web Space Station should not be run-of-the-mill shoot-'em-ups. First, excessive blaster play just won't fly with Klaar, the Defel security chief. Second, as every faction has a stake in keeping the jump points active, overt violence is frowned upon and actively discouraged by all sides. It's just bad for business.

Instead, adventures on the station should be geared more toward role-playing problems than those that must be solved with thermal detonators and lightsabers. Adventures that deal with political ramifications, intrigue, diplomacy, and the latest technological (or other) advancements are the goal. This isn't to say that the action and excitement of a typical *Star Wars* adventure should be left out—it should just be applied in different ways.

The three adventure hooks that follow show some examples of the types of events the Republic PCs can get involved with on Crystal Web. In every case, the PCs should be encouraged to keep their blasters ready, but to refrain from drawing them unless absolutely necessary. Being too quick to shoot first and ask questions later will just get them in trouble with the local law enforcers—and hurt the Republic's reputation as well. On Crystal Web, a character's reputation speaks louder and more eloquently than his blaster.

Adventure #1: The Best Intentions

The Lucents have finally decided to put a piece of their unique crystal-web technology up for sale. They have invited—through the station's baron-administrator—representatives of both the New Republic and the Empire to attend a meeting where the item will be presented. They plan to offer the item to both sides, thus maintaining the balance of power in the galactic war.

The item can be any starship component that slightly improves the current state of technology without making play too unbalanced. For example, a ×1/2 hyperdrive that requires no fuel and powers even the smallest starship is too much to add to a campaign. But a crystal-web nav computer that drops the difficulty of all astrogation attempts by one level (from Difficult to Moderate, for example) is probably okay.

The Lucents

The crystal spiders have been reluctant to share their technology with the rest of the galaxy. At first, this was because the Lucents wanted to learn more about their neighbors. Later, they refused to add fuel to the raging fire that was the Galactic Civil War. Now, however, with the two combatant forces closer to equal footing, Baron-Administrator Daren Tal has convinced the Lucents that they need to make a mark on the galaxy.

"Give them something small, yet impressive," Tal coaxed. "Something that will make them sit up and take notice." The Lucents agreed, but only if they could control the deal. They asked Tal to set up a meeting that would include the New Republic, the Empire, and a representative of a fringe group. It is the Lucents' intention to make the item available to all sides—not to start a bidding war.

The Lucents will gladly listen to all offers and arguments, but they will not be swayed from their course. The item will be given to everyone who wants it, or it will be given to no one at all. What they want is a fair and equitable price, and an expansion of their contact with the galactic community.

The Empire

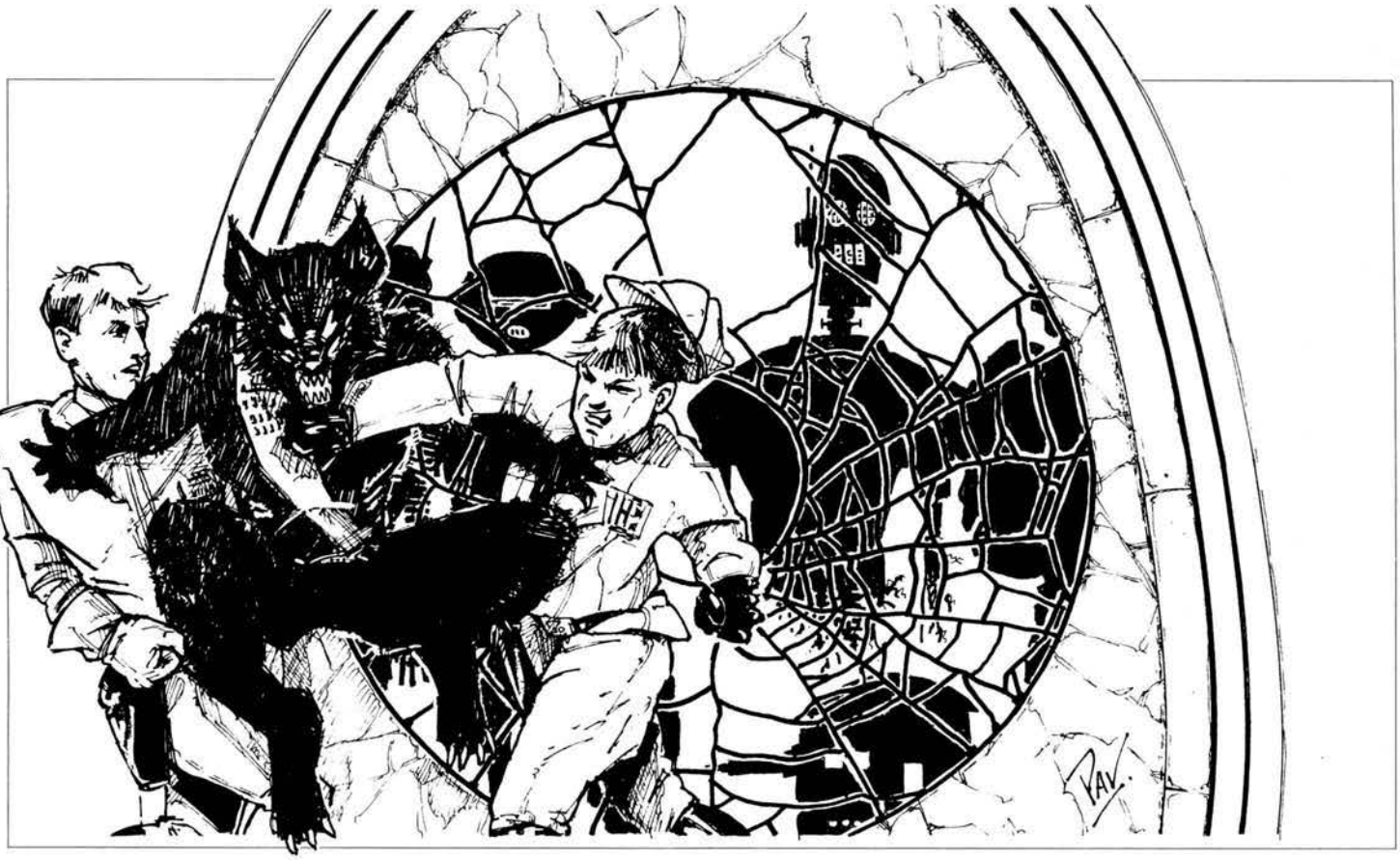
The Empire wants the crystal web technology for one reason—it wants to take it apart, study it, and figure out how to mass produce it for Imperial use. While the Imperial representatives won't be thrilled that the Lucents want to give it to everyone, they won't try any nastiness that will jeopardize their own chances at receiving the item. In fact, the Imperials—an admiral and his two aides—will go out of their way to be gracious, polite, and even friendly.

If the PCs direct any violence at the Imperials, the admiral and his aides will not fight back (except to defend themselves). Instead, they will complain to the baron-administrator and security chief of the station, hoping to get the PCs removed from the scene until after all deals with the Lucents are completed. If the PCs aren't careful, this scheme could work and the Republic would be left out of the meeting.

The Fringe

Orta the Hutt represents a consortium of "independent businesses" with interests on Crystal Web Station. These independent businesses include smuggling operations, information brokers, and other "less than legal" activities occurring on society's fringe. Orta plans to market the Lucents' item to all of his fringe associates and contacts. An invitation was extended to the Hutt at the Lucents' request, and though the Republic and the Empire may not appreciate his inclusion, his presence is something that they'll have to live with.

The Hutt may attempt to gain sole access of the item so that he can become the exclusive distributor of crystal web technology. The Lucents won't go along with this, but that won't stop Orta from



trying. He is not above hiring thugs to lean on the other representatives. Of course, he'll hire only thugs that can't be traced back to him.

How the PCs Fit In

At the moment, the New Republic doesn't have the personnel to spare to send true diplomats out to Crystal Web Station. Instead, the Republic will have to make due with the agents it already has in place—namely, the PCs.

The orders from the New Republic's Provisional Council are to attain the item while making sure the Imperials are left out in the vacuum. "Convince the Lucents that it is in the galaxy's best interest that an exclusive deal be arranged with the Republic," their orders dictate. "You have the authority to negotiate as you see fit, and within reason, but the item must not fall into Imperial hands." It will be up to the players to decide how they go about fulfilling these orders, and they will probably discover they must settle for only a compromised success.

As representatives of the New Republic, the PCs can approach this mission in any number of ways. They'll probably petition the baron-administrator first, hoping to make their case with him and gaining a friend in the negotiations to come. They may also seek private meetings with the Lucents, though such meetings are extremely hard to come by. Maybe they'll come up with a plan for keeping the Imperials from reaching the negotiations. This could work, but remember that any violence will attract the attention of Security Chief Klaar.

The PCs' best bet is to just go along with whatever the Lucents have to offer. It's their party, and sometimes it's better to go with the flow rather than trying to swim upstream. Still, PCs being PCs, they'll probably come up with all kinds of grand schemes and daring plots. Play it out as you see fit, but keep in mind the objectives and goals of this adventure idea.

In the End . . .

The point of this adventure is to demonstrate that even the best of intentions can sometimes lead to bad results. If the PCs are too pushy, if they engage in deadly tactics, or if they show themselves to be as bad or worse than the Imperials or the fringe, then the adventure should end with a powerful lesson. Sometimes even the Republic can mess things up.

The best course is to go along with the wishes of the Lucents, showing that the Republic and its agents respect the views and desires of others. Anything less will put the Republic in a negative light, as far as the Lucents are concerned, and may even result in the loss of the item for everyone. The Lucents will give the item only to all of the parties involved. If one group ruins it for the rest, so be it. The Lucents will rescind their offer and go back simply to running the station. They will figure that they made the offer too soon, and they'll just have to wait a bit longer before everyone learns to play together nicely.

This result may have some additional repercussions that could lead to future adventures. If the item is withdrawn, the Empire or Orta's gang may return at a later date to try to take the item by force. In such a case, it could fall to the PCs to help defend the station from attack.

Star Wars is ®, ™, & © 1994 Lucasfilm, Ltd. (LFL). All Rights Reserved.

Adventure #2: Debt of Honor

The current state of the Empire has left the once mighty war machine splintered and divided. Communications with Imperial Command is sporadic at best, and supplies and reinforcements rarely, if ever, arrive. Because of this breakdown, and because of the power vacuum left at the top since the Emperor's death, some planetary governors and capital ship captains have broken away from the Empire to seek their own fortunes and increase their personal power. Whether it's an Imperial ship that still follows the ideals of Emperor Palpatine or a rogue ship cruising the space lanes like a predator, starships require crews and supplies. This adventure idea plays off just such a scenario.

The PCs discover that Security Chief Klaar has been meeting secretly with a person they believe is an Imperial agent. In fact, the person works for Imperial Moff Jeckor, who governs the nearest inhabited system to the station. Klaar owes a debt to Imperial Moff Jeckor, who has demanded that the Defel provide him with information on the station and its inhabitants. In accordance with his people's honor code, Klaar does so.

The next meeting is set to occur in one of the station's cantinas. The PCs could become involved in one of two ways. First, they could approach Klaar before the meeting to ask him what's going on. Second, they could crash the meeting to find out first-hand what type of information Klaar is passing along to the Empire.

Things to Know

Klaar is not a bad guy. He takes his job as security chief very seriously, and the station is one of the safest, most peaceful places of its kind in the galaxy. He feels he owes something to Moff Jeckor because the Moff granted him his freedom while so many other aliens were being enslaved—or worse. Of course, Jeckor did this so that he could later call in favors from the Defel, not because he felt any friendship or sympathy for Klaar. Still, Klaar's personal honor demands that he repay the Moff, even though the method Jeckor has specified galls him.

The security chief would love to find a way out of the predicament he's in. He hates keeping secrets from Baron-Administrator Tal, and he hates being used as a spy for the Empire. However, a debt is a debt; and a debt must be paid.

Currently, Moff Jeckor has asked Klaar for some insignificant bit of information. His agent has specifically requested that Klaar pass it along in the most crowded cantina on the station. "The more packed the location, the less likely it will seem that we're doing anything . . . sneaky," the agent declared. The truth is, Moff Jeckor needs able bodies to crew one of his capital ships. With the academies shut down, official reinforcements are unlikely to arrive any time soon. To speed up the process, he has decided to conscript "volunteers" from a number of locations—including Crystal Web Station. Thus, he wants Klaar to point out the location with the most likely "volunteers." Klaar knows none of this. When the stormtroopers file in to gather conscripts (at blaster point, naturally), Klaar will be as surprised as everyone else in the cantina.

The PCs in this Adventure

If the PCs approach Klaar before the meeting, they can learn that he owes a debt of honor to an Imperial Moff. Their best bet in this case is to help the Defel figure out a way to erase the debt, or somehow convince him that a debt of honor can't be repaid by dishonorable acts. Whatever direction they take, the PCs will also have to come up with a way to deal with the Moff's agent.

If the PCs wait and follow Klaar to his meeting, they will get caught up in the raid on the cantina. Not only will they have to help repel Imperial troops, they will also have to do their best not to wind up as "volunteers" on Moff Jeckor's vessel.

In the End . . .

The point of this adventure is to involve the PCs in a situation that ties the station directly into the current state of the Empire. Klaar needs their help to balance his debts and cancel them out. They can also ingratiate themselves to the station and its occupants by helping to foil an Imperial conscription mission. Who knows? They may even find the Defel in their debt when the final credits roll.

Adventure #3: The Luminous Bantha

Banthas can be found on diverse worlds throughout the galaxy. Some beings have even gone so far as to develop a religion around the beasts of burden. These followers of the priests of Dim-U believe that the secrets of the galaxy are contained in the majestic bantha—if one can only see beyond its large, fur-covered exterior. These believers refuse to wear clothing made from bantha hides, reject meals made with bantha meat, and even call for better treatment of the noble creatures as befits those touched by the divine.

The Luminous Bantha refers to a small statue that recently wound up in the hands of Moko Jax, proprietor of Moko's Cantina. Not a believer in the Dim-U religion, Moko nonetheless appreciates a good piece of art. The Luminous Bantha stands about 30 centimeters tall and is an exact replica of the creature. It is carved from a single piece of glow stone—a translucent crystal substance with a warm, interior glow. He found it sitting on a bench in a dark corner of his cantina more than a week ago. No one has yet stepped forward to claim it, so Moko displays it on the counter behind his bar. He likes the way it looks there, and it makes a good conversation starter for his patrons.

The Real Story

The statue contains a data card, though the natural glow of the crystal hides the item quite nicely. What's on the card? Just the latest bit of important information that could greatly upset your campaign. For example, the card could contain the current route of the Republic's flagship, *Home One*. Or maybe it has the locations of hidden Republic safe worlds. Or, going in the other direction, it has some information that reveals vital secrets about the Empire or some crime lord's organization—information that the Republic would find extremely useful to have. It all depends upon the current needs of your *Star Wars* campaign.

The original carrier of the statue was smuggling the information to its intended target when circumstances changed his plans. When he noticed he was being followed, he left the statue behind and headed out with its empty carrying case. He could have been eliminated by those followers, or he

could still be around, seeking to reclaim the statue at the first opportunity.

The PCs in this Adventure

The PCs first notice the Luminous Bantha while visiting Moko's Cantina for a drink. It turns out that lots of people want to get their hands on the Bantha—Imperials (both rogues and loyalists), various fringe elements, corporate agents, you name it. One (or more) of these factions makes a play for the Bantha while the PCs are lounging in the cantina.

The attack occurs at the quietest part of the day, when Moko, the PCs, and one or two regulars are around. The violence is directed at Moko, scattering the regulars and drawing the attention of the PCs. They will have to work fast to save Moko and keep the attackers from walking off with the Bantha. The further involvement of the PCs should be assured as either the statue gets stolen in the confusion and Moko wants it back, or the attack makes him nervous so he gives the Bantha to them for safekeeping.

Possible attackers include stormtroopers, disguised Imperial agents, criminal types, bounty hunters, or hired muscle. Even if their first attack fails, they'll keep coming until the Bantha is theirs or the PCs finally stop them.

Which leads to how the rest of the adventure plays out. The best option is to make it a series of misadventures with the Luminous Bantha passing from hand to hand. This works especially well if all of the possible antagonists are after the statue (each for a different reason, of course). This gives an otherwise serious situation a humorous tone. The other possibility is to turn it into a murder mystery. The attackers escape with the Bantha, but when the PCs track them down they find them all dead—and the statue missing. The trail leads from one corpse to another as everyone who comes into contact with the Bantha winds up dead.

Eventually, the PCs learn why the Bantha is so coveted. Then they have to decide how to proceed with both the item and the information it contains. To do this, they have to stay alive long enough to discover who their true foe really is.

These scenario ideas are only the beginning of exciting adventures set on Crystal Web Space Station. As always, what you do with this material is up to you. Have fun with it, and Crystal Web could become as memorable a location to your campaign as any site in the film series.

Nonplayer Characters

Daran Tal

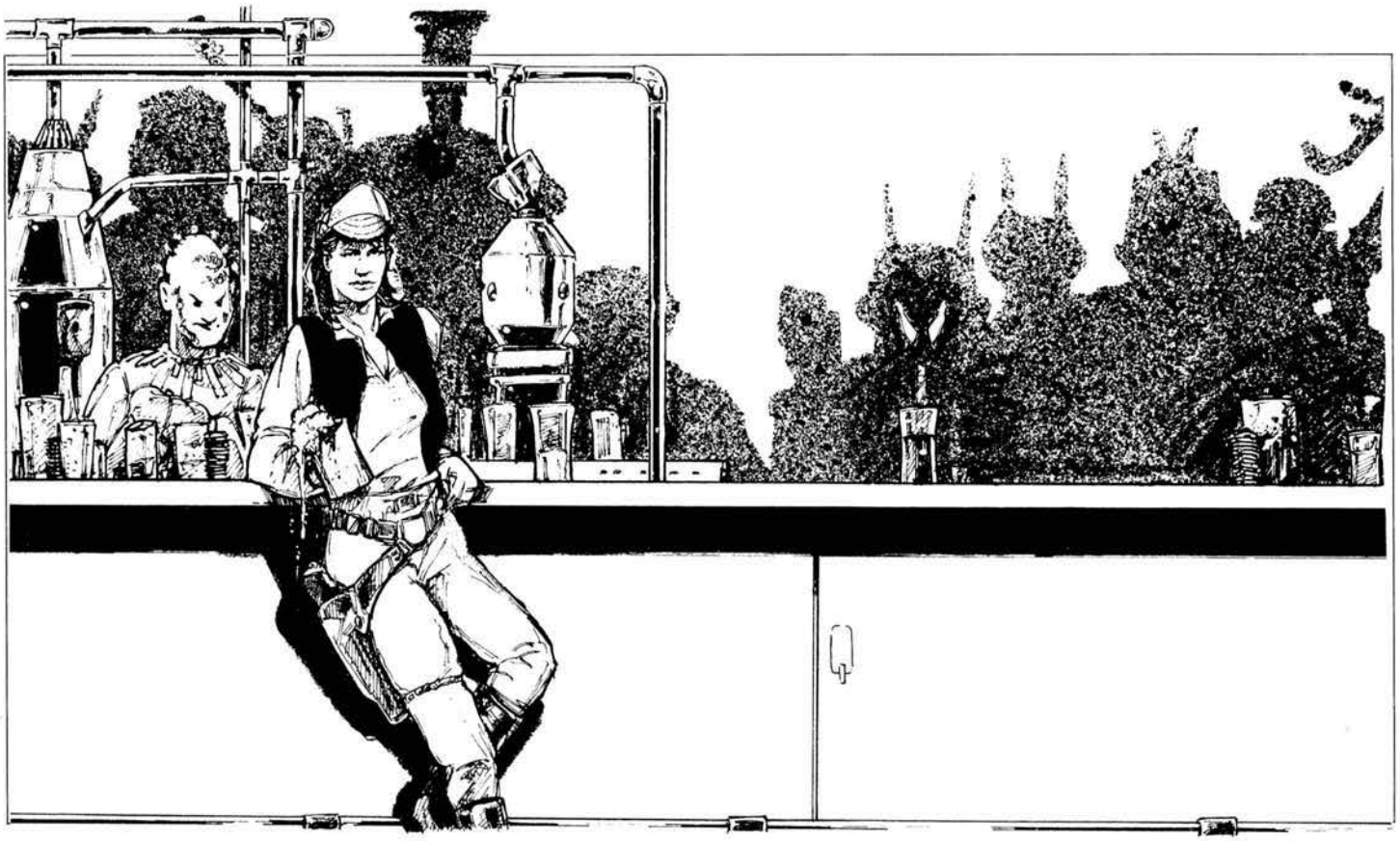
Template Type: Baron Administrator
Loyalty: To Crystal Web Station
Height: 1.8 meters
Species: Human
Homeworld: Bestine
Age: 37 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 3D+1
Blaster 4D+1, brawling parry 4D, dodge 5D, thrown weapons 4D
KNOWLEDGE 3D+1
Alien species 4D+1, bureaucracy 6D+2, business 6D, streetwise 5D+1
MECHANICAL 3D
Astrogation 3D+2, space transport piloting 4D+1
PERCEPTION 3D+1
Bargain 5D+2, command 6D, con 5D+2, investigation 4D+1, persuasion 6D+1
STRENGTH 2D+1
Brawling 3D+2
TECHNICAL 2D+2
Computer programming/repair 4D, droid repair 3D+2
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 1
Dark Side Points: 0
Character Points: 9
Move: 10
Equipment: Comlink, blaster (4D damage), throwing knives (STR + 1D damage), datapad
Quote: "I'm the administrator of this station. What can I do for you?"
Description: Daran Tal is an ambitious man who saw the potential of the Crystal Web Station, and whose careful planning and attention to detail has made the station a success. He is quite proud of his accomplishments, but he also knows that the station's success is mostly due to the Lucents who built the station in the first place. He's very careful to keep that fact a secret, both for his own pride and by the Lucents' wishes. He is devoted to cultivating the station's sphere of influence, and he does not look kindly on those who interfere with that goal, regardless of whether they're representatives of the Empire or the Republic.

Daran is friendly to a point. He's diplomatic but very firm, with few close friends but many associates. Unlike some other baron administrators, Daran is not flamboyant and gaudy. He dresses in tasteful clothes that suggest his station without flaunting it. He rarely raises his voice in anger, prefering to leave maintaining order to Klaar. If he does raise his voice, it's a sign he's been pushed too far—and is about to push back.

Lianna Tagon

Template Type: Liaison Officer
Loyalty: To Daran Tal
Height: 1.6 meters
Species: Human
Homeworld: Corulag
Age: 29 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 3D
Dodge 3D+2
KNOWLEDGE 4D
Alien species 6D+1, bureaucracy 5D, cultures 6D+1, languages 6D
MECHANICAL 2D
Communications 3D+1
PERCEPTION 3D+2
Bargain 5D+1, command 4D+2, persuasion 6D+2
STRENGTH 2D
TECHNICAL 3D+1
Computer programming/repair 4D
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 2
Dark Side Points: 0
Character Points: 4
Move: 10
Equipment: Comlink, datapad
Quote: "I'm sure we can find a simple solution to this problem."
Description: Lianna was one of the staff members Daran Tal brought with him when he returned to Crystal Web Station. He knew that it would take someone of uncommon tact and knowledge to deal with the many different peoples and factions he hoped the station would attract, and Lianna was perfect for the job. She handles the frictions between Imperial, Republic, Corporate Sector, and independent factions with ease and grace, rarely having to call on either the Baron Administrator or the security forces of the station.

Lianna is unfailing polite but firm in her dealings with both new arrivals to the station and its permanent residents. She tries to greet everyone who arrives, and likes to learn as much as she can about the "guests." She does not hover around people, however, preferring to judge them by their actions as she watches from a distance.



Klaar
Template Type: Defel
Loyalty: To Daran Tal
Height: 1.4 meters
Species: Defel
Homeworld: Af'El
Age: 25 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 3D
Blind fighting 4D, bowcaster 4D, brawling parry 5D, dodge 5D+1, grenade 4D+2
KNOWLEDGE 2D+1
Intimidation 4D+1, languages 3D+1, law enforcement 3D+1, streetwise 3D
MECHANICAL 3D
PERCEPTION 3D
Command 3D+2, investigation 3D+1, hide 4D, sneak 5D, search 4D+2
STRENGTH 4D+1
Brawling 6D+1, stamina 5D+1
TECHNICAL 2D+1
Security 3D+1
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 1
Dark Side Points: 0
Character Points: 6
Move: 10/13
Equipment: Visor, comlink, 2 stun grenades (5D stun damage), Wookiee bowcaster (4D damage)
Quote: "Is there a problem here?" (growled menacingly from the shadows)
Special Abilities: *Invisibility* (+3D to *sneak*), *claws* (damage *Strength* +2D)
Description: The Defel security chief is quite aware of the legends and fears people have about his race, and he's absolutely willing to use those fears if they can help him keep the peace. Since he could be hiding in a shadow just around the corner, permanent inhabitants of the Crystal Web Station are reluctant at best to do anything that would bring them to Klaar's attention.

Klaar is neutral in the conflict between Republic and Empire. He is concerned only with keeping the peace on the station. Unknown to even Daran Tal, however, Klaar owes a debt to Imperial Moff Jeckor. Jeckor has demanded that the Defel provide him with information on the station and its inhabitants, and in accordance with his people's honor code Klaar continues to do so.

Klaar favors the orderly nature of the Empire, but he admires the honor and audacity of the Republic. The information he passes to the Empire should not be construed as a preferrence or betrayal of his neutrality. What he provides could be learned by anyone on the station.

Danielle "Dani" Kieran
Template Type: Corellian Pilot
Loyalty: To herself
Height: 1.5 meters
Species: Human
Homeworld: Corellia
Age: 17 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 3D
Blaster 4D+2, dodge 4D+1
KNOWLEDGE 2D+1
Streetwise 3D+1, languages 3D+1
MECHANICAL 4D
Transport pilot 5D, transport pilot: YT-1300 6D, astrogation 4D+2
PERCEPTION 3D+2
Con 4D+2, gambling: sabacc 4D+2, sneak 4D
STRENGTH 2D
TECHNICAL 3D
Transport repair 4D, transport repair: YT-1300 5D
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 1
Dark Side Points: 0
Character Points: 5
Move: 10
Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (5D damage), deck of sabacc cards and skifter, 1,500 credits, YT-1300 transport *Century Hawk*, 12,500 credit debt to Talon Kaarde for ship
Quote: "I can fly *any* ship. Trust me!"

Description: Danielle Kieran (Dani to her friends) looks strangely familiar—even to strangers. Maybe it's the fact that she's a crack pilot, and pilots all over the galaxy have a certain look. Or maybe it's the Corellian outgoingness that simply makes her approachable and easy to be around. Or maybe it's the resemblance she has to a certain other, very (in)famous, Corellian pilot . . .

Dani is fiercely proud of her piloting skills, but even more of her secret: *she is Han Solo's daughter*. Dani had been digging through some old holofiles when she came across holographs of Han and her mother from her mother's younger days. They looked very friendly in those holos—and Dani decided that her father, a father her mother never talks about, is *the* Han Solo. So far, she hasn't shared this theory with anyone, but she believes it with all her heart.

Dani owns a ship—a YT-1300 stock light freighter, of course. She's determined to tinker it into some kind of reasonable shape; "reasonable" being as close to the *Millennium Falcon* as she can manage. She's marking time on Crystal Web Station until she can find a way to improve her ship, prove herself, and think of a way to introduce herself to Solo.

Dani idolizes Han Solo. She doesn't reveal her (supposed) connection to him, because of the many enemies she's heard about. But she flies the same ship, uses the same blaster, plays the same games, wears the same kind of clothes, and so on.

Adventure hooks for Dani center around her drive to prove herself as Han's daughter. She's got her eye on making the Kessel Run, not to beat his time (since no one could do that!), but to make him take notice. She doesn't want to approach him until she's done something to make him proud of her.

Taver Soren

Template Type: Ex-Imperial Lieutenant
Loyalty: To the New Republic
Height: 1.8 meters
Species: Human
Homeworld: Corulag
Age: 36 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 2D+2
Blaster artillery 3D+2, blaster artillery: anti-vehicle 4D+2, vehicle blasters 3D+2
KNOWLEDGE 2D+2
Tactics: ground assault 4D+2
MECHANICAL 3D
Walker operation 4D+2
PERCEPTION 3D
Command 4D+2, command: stormtroopers 5D+1
STRENGTH 3D+1
TECHNICAL 3D+1
Demolition 5D+1, demolition: vehicles 6D+1, starship repair 6D+2
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 1
Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 7
Move: 10
Equipment: Blaster (damage 4D), comlink, data pad
Quote: "In this crazy galaxy, you have to do what's right."
Description: Taver was just like many of the young men recruited by the Empire. When he was accepted to the Imperial Academy, it was like a dream come true. He proved to have a natural talent for tactics and ground assaults, and worked his way up through the ranks to lieutenant in charge of an AT-AT. His missions usually involved taking care of enemy large assault vehicles. Whether they belonged to Rebels or some unruly local population, it was these vehicles that were targeted. He was never ordered to attack the populations themselves—until Endor.

When Taver and his walker crew were ordered to the forest moon, he assumed that it was a mission like every other. When his squad was ordered to assault the helpless Ewoks, however, Taver was horrified by the carnage. Caught between loyalty and outrage at the Empire's gross conduct, Taver withdrew his AT-AT from the fight. It was only after the Death Star was destroyed and the evil influence of the Emperor fell away that Taver rejoined the fight—on the side of the Rebels. A Rebel squad was immensely surprised when instead of a Rebel inside a captured walker, an Imperial officer and his crew emerged and surrendered. Taver asked to join the Alliance.

Taver is currently struggling both against himself and certain factions of the Republic. Not all trust a "reformed" Imperial, and he sometimes finds his queries misdirected and his offers of help refused. Taver himself is uncomfortable with the loose command style of the Republic, and still uncertain about all these . . . *aliens* in the hierarchy. While he's determined to make "penance" for his actions with the Empire, he's still not entirely certain the Republic is the right place to do so.

Taver has set up shop on the station, running a starship repair bay called "We Fix Anything." The PCs do not know that he is a Republic agent, but he may reveal himself or simply offer aid when they most need it.

Moko Jax

Template Type: Barkeep
Loyalty: To himself
Height: 1.7 meters
Species: Twi'lek
Homeworld: Ryloth
Age: 48 Standard Years
DEXTERITY 3D
Archaic guns 4D, dodge 4D+2
KNOWLEDGE 3D+2
Alien species 5D, business 4D+1, languages 4D+2, streetwise 5D, value 4D+1
MECHANICAL 2D
PERCEPTION 3D+2
Bargain 5D+2, con 4D+1, gambling 4D+1, persuasion 4D+2, search 5D
STRENGTH 2D+1
Brawling 3D+1, stamina 4D+2
TECHNICAL 3D+1
Droid repair 4D, first aid 3D+2
Force Sensitive?: Yes
Force Points: 2
Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 6
Move: 10
Equipment: Hold-out blaster (damage 2D+2), club (damage STR+1D)
Quote: "You're a troublemaker. I can tell."
Description: Every place needs a relief valve, and Moko's Cantina is one of the establishments that serves that function for Crystal Web Station. It's a microcosm of the station itself: Republic sympathizers drink alongside Imperials who eye aliens balefully. One of the reasons for the bar's success is Moko Jax, the bartender and owner.

Moko has no Force skills, never having been taught to tap his potential abilities (and if asked, he'd scoff at the idea of "Jedi stuff" anyway); but patrons who frequent his tavern regularly find that he seems especially *sensitive* to their needs. If they want to talk, he's leaning on the bar prepared to lend a sympathetic ear; if they want to be left alone, he seems to know that, too. Most assume that he's simply got the bartender's craft down pat, and he'd agree with that assessment.

Moko's Cantina is the place for PCs to make contacts, get information, and relax. Those who start fights, for whatever reason, are not invited back. ❑

The Cult of Ao

Who Watches Those who Watch over You?

Steven E. Schend

The Cult of Ao . . . not a dangerous group really, but a volatile source of religious fervor without divine direction or restraint. While I have cause to applaud some of their efforts, there are times they prove disruptive to the delicate peace the Lords keep in our City of Splendors. Their views are extreme, and those that preach them are trouble, no matter what their cause."

Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun

History

The Time of Troubles, now nine years past, revealed much to the people of the Realms. It showed their gods to be petty, grasping beings—little better than many who worshipped them. While magical and physical chaos rocked the lands, centuries of theological discussions among priests and laymen alike were answered by the actions of the gods themselves. The banishment of the gods to the Realms, at the very least, acknowledged the existence of an "overgod," a mighty power with the ability to punish and reward the gods for their actions (or inactions). A number of cults to this overgod, Ao, grew swiftly after the Time of Troubles. Many fell apart just as swiftly when priests realized they did not receive spells from Ao—but not everyone lost faith.

The largest and grandest of the cults was based in Waterdeep, as many of the populace heard Ao's voice over Mount Waterdeep after the vanquishment of Myrkul and the ascension of Midnight and Cyric's godhood. A large marble temple was built in less than a month upon the ruins on Trader's Way (the site of Myrkul's death). Many worshippers flocked to the temple, including many nobles intent on following what seemed the latest fashion. After six months, the temple's flock was reduced by mortal and divine disinterest. Soon, the temple was empty save for a few sporadic services. The Lords of Waterdeep annexed the temple building and have since put it to use as a public hall, available for rent by nobles (and up-and-coming merchants) for parties, balls, weddings, etc. Its name of the "Highest Temple of the Overgod," carved into the frieze, has been magically altered to its new name: The Cynosure (a title both apt and ironic, given the Pavilion of the Cynosure, the celestial meeting place of the gods). Despite the secular use of the building now, there are still a few who worship Ao within its walls.

The Cult of Ao is currently reduced to less than 50 known and active members throughout the Realms, the largest collection residing in Waterdeep and the Sword Coast lands. The Waterdeep sect, by far the most organized, now meets in secret in various cellars, taprooms, and (rarely) at the Plinth or within the walls of their former temple. While comprised of people of all callings, the Cult of Ao does not include any of the spell-less priests of Ao (though a few priests of other faiths belong to the Cult as swayed ideologues). The Cult has enthusiastically embraced their god's apparent tenets heard during the Time of Troubles:

I. Ao created the Balance to establish Order.

II. The Balance among gods and men must be maintained to keep Order.

III. The Duties of gods and their servants are tantamount to maintaining the Balance.

IV. It is the Duty of the Eyes of Ao to be ever-vigilant that gods and their servants fulfill their Duties.

V. It is the Duty of the Eyes of Ao to enforce the Balance and keep Order.

There are also several lesser teachings within the Cult, and they deal with the gods' new status in the Realms. With their powers dependent upon their number of worshippers, the gods are vulnerable. They have become the servants of the masses, just as their priests are their servants. If there are ever situations where priests, paladins, or a church as a group does not (in the Cult's view) serve its worshippers, the Eyes of Ao will try to force the god and its servant to perform their duties to the people. Whenever clerics or servants of a deity place their welfare ahead of the welfare of their god's followers, the Cult of Ao seeks heavy reprisals in bringing that servant back into Balance.

The Cult of Ao is led by Touras Niveradon, a powerful wizard and worshipper of Oghma, the god of knowledge. As the head of the cult, Touras magically keeps watch over the clergies within Waterdeep (and beyond, through the eyes and ears of his agents), making sure none stray from duty's path. Many of the cult also worship other gods devoutly, though they are perceived as the most extremely conservative of worshippers in terms of interpreting the god's teachings. If there is any softening or change in the god's teachings by the priests or the holy warriors (paladins), the Cult of Ao quickly investigates to ensure that they do not stray from the duty of that god (or that the god itself does not stray).

Cult Activities

In the nine years of the Cult's existence within the City of Splendors, the Cult has performed quite a few memorable feats in their zeal to protect Ao's Balance. The Cult does not actively hunt down and destroy evil cults (such as the Cult of Ghaunadar) any more than it persecutes the good clergies. If any one god gains a large number of followers, the Cult uses its financial influence to promote the worship of an opposing god; failing that, they may be forced to act directly against a growing church. When a ship sponsored by Maxtilar Rhebbos and the priesthood of Sune arrived in Waterdeep with a load of statuary for the Temple of Beauty four years ago, it mysteriously sank just south of the City; Touras felt "Sune's duties and monies should go to her people in Waterdeep, toward making a place of worship look like an overgrown festhall." Now the beautiful statuary occupies places of honor on a small underwater reef outside of Waterdeep's harbor and formalizes the worship of the mermens' deities; "An adequate balance, all in all, and nothing is truly lost save the arrogance of a spendthrift Sunite." Similar actions have occurred. For instance, cultists defaced the

opulent Spires of the Morning while funding smaller places of worship within the Trades and North Wards.

Cult Membership

While there are at least 20 cult members within or near the city of Waterdeep, the members are not known to the city watch or the guard; the Lords may know more, but they reveal few secrets. Among the members are:

Touras Niveradon: (CN hm W17) Well suited to his leadership of the Cult, Touras is one of the most knowledgeable sages on all the Realms' gods, their churches, and their practices beyond the church. Unfortunately, his involvement with Ao's worshippers began tragically.

Formerly a native of Silverymoon, Touras left his home in grief when his wife died from one of her miscast spells during the Godswar; a simple knock spell brought the wooden door to her home to life, and it strangled her. Arriving in Waterdeep during Myrkul's attack, Touras watched in horror as panicked priests abandoned their charges and fled from battling the dark minions in the streets; he saved a small group of children and quickly blasted the offending cleric who left them to die. When Helm's voice boomed over the peak of Mount Waterdeep, Touras headed up the mountain to hear Lord Ao stating "I created the gods to serve the Balance, not to twist it to your own ends." Since then, Touras holds the gods and their servants responsible for his tragedy and focuses all of his energy into keeping them on what he sees as the path of Balance as Ao intends it. While not a leading member of the Cult when publicly known, his quiet yet forceful presence speaks volumes for him now.

Ewsav Lection: (LG hm F5) A Waterdhavian guardsman and griffon-rider, Ewsav watched as three mortals confronted Helm, his god, and Helm's master on the peak of Mount Waterdeep. Profoundly moved by his encounter with the gods, Ewsav embraced Ao's cult and remains a member today. He rarely acts in the Cult's behalf while on duty—if he encounters a violation of Ao's order during his shift, he waits and covertly acts with allies against the transgressor, taking care to not be connected with such reprisals.

Thur Aquarvol: (CG mermaid C3 "shaman" of Deep Sashelas) With the sinking of the *Goddess' Glory* and the dumping of several precious statuary, Thur finally established her long-desired reef temple to Deep Sashelas, Umberlee, and all the sea gods. Thur's involvement with the cult comes from her belief in establishing a balance between land and sea gods, "as there are other powers beneath the waves that are ignored by myopic surface dwellers." Of late, Thur's behavior has been quite erratic and she disappears for two or three days' time with no explanation.

Kerritas Reefsilver: (LN merman F4) A member of the Waterdeep guard specifically assigned to the underwater harbor patrol, Kerritas is a cult member simply to keep the harbor peaceful. After Myrkul's minions claimed the lives of many of his fellow mermen guards, Kerritas vowed to do whatever was necessary to keep such an invasion from happening again; answering a summons, he met with Touras Niveradon and learned of Ao's Order which he adopted (though not as passionately as his betrothed, Thur Aquarvol). Kerritas and two sea elves

were responsible for the sinking of the *Goddess' Glory,* Maxtilar Rhebbos' ship.

Syrella Bronzeleaf: (NG hef R9) Syrella makes her home among the trees of the High Forest. While she keeps her reasons to herself, she does journey to Waterdeep at least twice a year and keeps in touch with Touras. Syrella doesn't pay much attention to the wider picture, but she fervently makes sure that all worshippers of nature (Silvanus, Mielikki, Chauntea, Eldath, and even Malar) adhere to her strict ideals. She once killed a small band of adventurers whose member druid didn't protect the forest from their axes with enough fervor.

Tiber Flinteye: (NE dm F6) Tiber Flinteye, a dwarven adventurer who winters in Waterdeep at the Raging Lion inn, is a close-minded, stubborn old dwarf with an undeniable hatred of elves. Tiber visits his bitterness on the elves, as their god Labelas Enoreth attacked and wounded his god Clangeddin during the Godswar. Tiber joined the Cult of Ao in hopes of restoring his race's life while restoring the Balance and to hunt down worshippers of the hated Enoreth.

Player Characters & The Cult

When Dungeon Masters bring the Cult into role-playing, keep in mind that any members of this band are extremist in their views and rarely (barring incredible feats of role-playing and logic) change their minds once set in their viewpoint. So entrenched are they in their adherence to Ao's Balance that their agents tenaciously dog the steps of transgressors (and potential transgressors!) for many a tenday, watching to ensure that clerics and paladins alike stay on the conservative path that their gods set before them (and, in this way, the gods attending their flocks through their servants).

How can the Cult of Ao become a part of your on-going Realms campaign? In a city the size of Waterdeep, it's certainly not hard to meet someone you've never met before—it could be a Cult member. If visiting a shrine in another major city on Faerun, chances are (depending on the DM) you could find another devotee of Ao's Order. But how can the Cult truly have an impact on the game? How do you avoid "You see a raving madman arguing with a local priest of So-And-So . . ?" Here are a few suggestions:

As Members

Player characters can join the Cult if they find a way to contact Touras Niveradon; many rumors place him often at the Font of Knowledge, the new temple to Oghma in Waterdeep's Castle Ward. Other options include engaging Touras in theological discussions at the Plinth or in Philosopher's Square. Touras doesn't accept everyone into this sect, being rightly paranoid, and player characters must prove they believe in Ao's Balance (or at least want to free clergies and the worshippers from corruption).

If accepted as members, the campaign could become what the players wish it to become, depending on how literally they adopt the five codes of the Cult. Options for PC members include many extreme (and not-so-extreme) methods to show Ao's will.

* Some members could adopt a "witch-hunt" attitude, actively hunting down guilty transgressors of their own faiths (or not-so-guilty clerics who seem guilty); this, of course, leaves the PCs with quite a few enemies.

* Another option is to add a little more depth and thought to the clerics and paladins in the FORGOTTEN REALMS; as members of the Cult of Ao, the player characters are now far more alert about church practices, proper conduct, and the responsibilities inherent with the service of the gods.

* Touras can uncover some rare religious texts among the texts at Oghma's temple, and he sends the PCs off to corroborate such information with more books and evidence. This establishes the PCs as archaeologists of sorts as well as historians; a Sword Coast campaign from Waterdeep to Candlekeep's libraries and back could be entertaining and educational!

* The Cult requests that the PCs entrench themselves within the order of some other god (within Waterdeep or anywhere in the Realms) and act as the Cult's eyes in keeping that particular faith within the boundaries of Ao's Order.

Whether used as an adventure motivation (hunt down the guilty, find evidence of Ao's existence for disbelievers) or as more background depth and color ("proper" clerical services, etc.), being members of the Cult of Ao will certainly change how you look at the Realms!

As Targets

A far more interesting way to work the Cult of Ao into a Realms campaign is to put the PCs (specifically the clerics, druids, and paladins) under the scrutiny of a powerful cult member. Just as being a cultist can show PCs the intricacies and details of religious service, now the PCs are being watched to make sure they uphold those same details, and any transgressions from them are often viewed with extreme prejudice.

* A large, burly man joins the PCs and looms over the clerics and other religious characters, making sure they uphold their vows to protect their worshippers and follow the tenets of their god.

* A better cult member to dog the PCs' steps is a rogue—what better way to make clerical PCs nervous than to have someone sneak into their tents at night, silent and unseen, to whisper warnings to them about their duty and slip away to return later? If that doesn't have your PCs jumping out of their skins after the third visit, nothing will.

* Judgment by the cult doesn't mean a battle with the agent, though it sometimes does (with a number of fatalities on both sides of the issue). Some transgressors are brought to Waterdeep "to answer for their crimes," while some are directed to places in which to do penance. ("To redeem yourself and restore your good ability to the service of your god and the Balance, go to Candlekeep and learn what you can of the older ways of worship of both your own god and the god of your enemies.")

Regardless of the form or the outcome, the scrutiny of the Cult and its agents should be an irritating, suffocating, and tense situation for players' clerics and paladins.

Current Cult Activities

* Touras had been funneling funds to a pair of agents operating in Cormyr and the Dalelands to fund a number of local shrines for villages away from major

Continued on page 31

The Living Galaxy

The Galactic One-On-One: One-Character Adventures, Part 2

by Roger E. Moore

Last month, we looked at ways to create a science fiction player character for role-playing games having only one player and one Game Master. Because one player takes on all the opposition usually allotted to a large group of specialists, a reasonably powerful and well-rounded PC works best.

The GM of a one-on-one game, too, must have a well-rounded view of things. Solo adventures should entertain and challenge the player, but killing the player's character off too soon or too often makes for a short, frustrating campaign. What is the best way to set up role-playing adventures for one player, then?

We'll look at a few examples of PCs in one-player, one-character campaigns, and see how adventures can be generated for them. First, however, let's look at a few general guidelines for creating and running one-on-one games.

Focus On The Foe

I recently had the pleasure of reading the manuscript for *The Complete Book of Villains,* an AD&D® DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide Reference by Kirk Botula. It struck me as an astoundingly creative book of great use to the GM of any RPG. The book suggests that the starting point for designing any home-made adventure be the villain. A well-crafted bad guy easily suggests a variety of plots and plans for adventures of any length and for any group. The book goes on to present a detailed system for creating remarkably lifelike and exciting villains. The book is very light on AD&D game statistics (and the principles are easily generalized), so it is ideal for use in almost any game.

When creating one-PC adventures, then, the following guidelines are in order for the GM:

1. Consider the PC's possible roles. The role that a PC might play in an adventure is not the same thing as his or her character class, occupation, career, or what have you. The role relates to the sort of mission that the PC is expected to perform in the adventure—the actual hands-on work that will be done.

For example, a police officer on a heavily populated world could take the role of a rescuer (saving people from a car wreck), hunter (chasing down wanted criminals), fugitive (being chased by ex-convicts seeking revenge), or guard (ensuring that valuable shipments are not stolen). Many other roles—such as detective, spy (acting as an undercover agent in a criminal gang), warrior, scout (checking a suspected gang headquarters), and diplomat—might also be suggested.

Just because a PC is a military soldier doesn't mean that fighting is all he is expected to do. That can get rather boring in a game campaign. Offering a variety of roles for the PC to play in different adventures, or even in the same adventure, ensures campaign interest. And, with only one player present, keeping campaign interest high is paramount!

2. Develop a foe against which the PC must work. A foe might be an intelligent being (a local thug or a rogue computer), a group of intelligent beings (a gang of thieves or a mercenary company), a relatively unintelligent opponent (a man-eating monster or horde of army ants), or even a force of nature (a volcano or hurricane). Whatever the foe, it is going to make the PC's life difficult until the PC learns to resolve the conflict.

The Complete Book of Villains is an excellent reference for developing intelligent foes who go beyond the pale of normal opponents, but not every foe needs to be wicked and cruel. A clever cat burglar might commit theft but go out of her way never to harm anyone during a robbery, preferring to do her dirty work when no one is around. A rival bounty hunter might have nothing against the PC except for a desire to one-up the character on every mission, getting the rewards for himself.

3. Find ways in which the foe and PC will meet and come into conflict. Once a foe is developed, suitable adventures involving it automatically suggest themselves. Take the police officer PC we mentioned earlier. How would he most likely meet the cat burglar or bounty hunter? You could probably list two or three ways in only a minute. You could even develop an adventure plot around the three of them, with the police officer and the bounty hunter both trying to catch the cat burglar after she's pulled off a particularly daring robbery. (The officer's job might be on the line if he lets the bounty hunter get to the quarry first!)

It is important to let the plot you develop with the opponents be fairly loose, adapting it to the goals and plans that the foes have in their minds and to the events that play out in the game. *The Complete Book of Villains* suggests doing this instead of figuring out how you want the adventure to end; instead, let the player and your villains decide how the adventure ends! Thus you avoid railroading the player into a predetermined path of limited choices during the adventure.

4. Look to the past and future. Is there some way that this adventure can be linked, even vaguely, to a past adventure or to an adventure yet to come? If so, you ensure campaign continuity, making your universe seem all the more real to the player. Nothing in real life happens in a vacuum. All events are interrelated somehow; pulling apart and tracing the threads can be a fascinating bit of detective work that adds to the mystery and adventure of the campaign.

5. Above all, keep the adventures relatively simple and limited at first. Do not start out a one-on-one campaign with the PC going up against the universe's mightiest crime organization. Start out small and keep things small for a good while, and save the alien invasion for a few weeks away.

Remember K.I.S.S.: Keep It Simple & Short. Bigger plots and campaigns will appear easily if you let them grow naturally. Catching the cat burglar and one-upping the bounty hunter need not be especially complicated as a first adventure for the cop. But perhaps the bounty hunter will become nastier on future missions, eventually setting booby traps for the cop, or the cat burglar's brother might try to blackmail the cop into freeing his sister from prison. The bounty hunter might become a major criminal himself, even

joining forces with the cat burglar's brother and several other criminals. Things begin to snowball as more people become involved, and the cop's life is soon full of trouble.

Putting It All To Work

The following are three examples of one-player, one-PC campaigns. Each one began under a different set of circumstances, and each player had a different PC in mind. Some ways to set up long-running campaigns are outlined for each one, with potential adventures as well.

The Running Man
For use with interstellar campaigns, such as GDW's Traveller, *FASA's* BattleTech/MechWarrior, *TSR's BUGHUNTERS™, or West End Games'* Star Wars: The RPG *games.*

It's June, the semester at college is over, and Walt's long-running interstellar campaign is breaking apart. Two group members have moved away, two more (college students) have gone home for the summer, and one has gotten an evening job and lost interest in gaming—for now, anyway. Everyone's character either retired or died during the last adventure. Only Sarah is left as a regular, and no new gamers have yet appeared to fill the ranks.

Walt and Sarah will be staying on or near campus, and Sarah wants to keep role-playing for the summer as a diversion from her summer semester classes. She's become ferociously attached to her character, a retired espionage agent who still handles jobs for his agency but travels freely on his own. Can Janus Banbeck, special agent and free-lance troubleshooter, keep active until the fall semester and a new player group arrive?

Walt looks at his campaign. He's invested a lot of time in it, and he would prefer not to throw the whole thing out. He'd also rather not start the campaign over again in the fall; covering the same territory would be too boring for him (and for Sarah).

After some thought, he decides to start a new campaign based on the old one, set one or two years after the old campaign's termination date and located in a nearby section of space. Sarah's PC, Janus, will be active during the interim period, at a time when major plot shifts take place to put a new spin on the action. Janus, assuming he survives, can meet with new PCs in the fall and serve to introduce newcomers to the campaign.

Walt checks out the idea with Sarah, who is quite happy to keep gaming. They set up gaming time for once or twice a week, and Walt goes to work on the interim campaign.

Sarah's character is fairly well-rounded—strong in combat and espionage skills, charismatic, reasonably well informed and educated, and equipped with ultramodern, high-tech devices to make his spying skills all the more effective. However, he is weak on wilderness survival and has no technical spacecraft skills.

Walt decides to keep most of the action in "civilized" surroundings, though with a wilderness setting or two to keep Janus on his toes. To make Janus's life even more interesting, Walt elects to cut him off from his agency in a rather permanent fashion. The break will tie in nicely with the set-up for the new situation in the fall campaign.

Janus's first few adventures are minor ones. Hired by a corporate heiress to recover some stolen papers, he returns them to find the heiress mortally wounded. With her dying breath, she warns Janus that he is in great danger. She, too, worked for the secret agency to which Janus belongs, and she believes the agency has been attacked by a rival organization, name unknown. Janus must flee for his life to survive.

What Janus doesn't know is that his organization has been taken over at higher levels by villains working within his own government. Extremist elements have secretly decided to "rein in" those spies they felt were too independent, so Janus and several other agents have been marked for "irreversible career termination." Trustworthy members of the espionage network have been fed false data that Janus and others have become double agents working for an enemy agency, and should be found and stopped at all costs.

Janus will likely run into several traps and false friends before he realizes the extent of his danger. Fighting his own agency is absurd for now, so Janus's best option is to move on—which is precisely what Walt wants, as he wishes to start the new campaign in a little-explored, rarely visited part of the old interstellar area. Guiding Janus there will not be difficult: A huge interstellar cruiser appears, someone offers to hire Janus on as a bodyguard, and off he goes. (If he doesn't pick up the bait, Walt can try other ways to lure him to the new campaign zone.)

The rest of the interim campaign consists of short adventures, generally unconnected, as Janus travels across space on the cruiser. He visits new worlds, meets lots of interesting people, and gets into trouble, as always happens to PCs. His foes consist of thieves, escaped alien monsters, extortionists, and occasional assassins from his former agency. His combat, diplomatic, and espionage skills are tested time and again.

At the end of the voyage, about the time that the fall semester is due to start, Janus sees news that his home government has been purged of extremists who tried to seize control of the government. This occurred not long after he fled familiar territory. About the time he hears the news, he is spotted by one of the extremists, who fled to avoid capture and has shown up in the same area of space by pure chance.

The battle between Janus and the villain who had him chased out of his own agency will cap the end of the summer interim campaign. Janus is on his own in a new area of space, ready to begin a new series of adventures—with a new group of PCs and players.

Little Freehold On The Prairie
For any planet-based science fiction campaign, including post-holocaust games and those using a modified modern-day espionage or warfare rules systems, such as TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ or GDW's Twilight: 2000 *game.*

Mikki has been developing a unique campaign that uses 20th-century warfare rules, but with an extraterrestrial setting. She runs a regular game on Saturday nights, but Grant usually can't make it then because of time conflicts. He's free on Wednesday nights, however, and Mikki has some time then, too. Mikki decides to set up a one-on-one campaign whose action will parallel the events in the Saturday night campaign.

Mikki and Grant work out an arrangement whereby he will run a fairly powerful PC on Wednesday night in the side campaign. Grant's character is generated by a special series of rolls and selection to be a retired military officer who has finally settled down, taking charge of a family homestead on a newly settled planet (the setting of the Saturday night campaign, but some

distance removed from the center of action of the other group).

Mikki and Grant also work out the details of the large, fortified homestead and its personalities (all nonplayer characters), even drawing up maps of the homestead and surrounding territory. Grant's character is a human cyborg, Finnegan, who is tired of warfare and wishes only to spend his future in relaxation. Unfortunately, of course, this is not going to happen. Finnegan has many survival skills, knows the basics of electronic and mechanical repair, and is an established leader. He has only a limited reserve of spare parts for his robotic prostheses, however, and has health problems that require him to take medication or suffer from infections and exhaustion.

The Saturday night group's activities revolve around a major war brewing between two colonial nations on the world's major continent; most of the group are playing settlers, mercenaries, or native folk. Grant's cyborg-soldier lives on the world's minor continent, in a nation allied with that of the other players. The global tension between the two hostile nations is rising toward a peak, and plenty is going on to affect both the solo and multiplayer groups.

Mikki patterned the world conflict after the many wars of the 1700s fought between England and France over North America. The colonies are very young but rich in resources, with limited technology (about that of Earth in 1940) and sporadic support from off-world governments. Two intelligent races were native to this world before its colonization by humans; members of both races are allied with each of the hostile human factions.

Developing adventures to keep Finnegan busy turns out to be rather easy for Mikki, a history buff. Aside from the usual problems with crops, the weather, herd animals, disease, and domestic troubles in Finnegan's household, there are enemy raiders, spies and traitors in his own organization, and the possibility of an attack against his homestead. The enemy colonists are bad enough, but some of the "friendly" colonial leaders are almost as bad as the foe, constantly bickering among themselves or seeking ways to add Finnegan's land to their own holdings.

Finnegan's worst foe, however, is a "friendly" military commander who wishes to conquer the minor continent for himself, using help from the enemy colonists (whom he will quickly betray, too, given half a chance). Andros Hydra, the traitor, will work in secret at first to disrupt alliances among the homesteads like Finnegan's, then lead a surprise guerilla war against them, cutting them to pieces one group at a time.

Mikki arranges both campaigns to reflect the general events leading up to the French and Indian War of 1754-1763. Numerous heavy assaults will eventually occur against the major colonial cities and military centers, and fighting will envelop the world. She even has a few story lines worked out in which Finnegan might call upon the Saturday group to perform missions for him—ensuring the shipment of badly needed military supplies, for instance, or finding and rescuing a member of his family kidnapped by traitors and brought to the major continent. Perhaps Finnegan can do something to help the Saturday group's characters in return.

Running Grant in his solo campaign provides an entertaining counterpoint to the regular group meeting, giving everyone a chance to participate in the action and giving the campaign an unpredictable, exciting, and off-beat flavor.

The Green Recruit

For war-oriented SF games, such as Palladium's Robotech, *FASA's* Renegade Legion, *or (with few modifications) GDW's* Merc: 2000 *game.*

Tony's group loves combat. All five of the players have experienced characters who operate as a long-range recon and patrol group that also performs special missions, such as POW rescues and sabotage. Tony's campaign is loosely based on events in the Vietnam War, though using a regular SF game system.

Eddie wants to join the group and everyone's willing to have him, but the campaign is fairly complex and it would slow down the group to take him directly into the action. Tony asks Eddie if he would mind watching one or two sessions of the game first, to get a feel for the style of play. In addition, Tony will set up a few sessions with Eddie alone to generate a character for him, then run the PC through a short scenario to familiarize him with both the game system and the planet where the action takes place, and to get a little experience under his character's belt. Eddie eagerly agrees, and the (short-term) solo campaign begins.

Eddie's PC is worked out to be a nonhuman alien from a military unit allied with that of the regular group. Eddie's first scenario consists of his character going on a patrol mission with his team—but his squad is ambushed and destroyed, and he is cut off behind enemy lines. He must now survive in hostile territory, facing a variety of dangers ranging from booby traps to poisonous wildlife to enemy soldiers.

Tony sets up the scenario to show Eddie the basics of combat and daily life on the world where the war is raging, much as a green recruit would learn during a real war. Eddie's alien soldier quickly learns not to wade through water without testing it with a pole, to avoid eating the nauseating "black apples" in the bush, and to use his combat equipment effectively. He also learns about the nature of the enemy troops, and he comes up with a few creative ways to survive in this unusually dangerous landscape. (The danger, of course, is parcelled out in smaller batches than usual. The point is to train Eddie's PC, not to kill it off—though that possibility might be there!)

After three solo game sessions with Eddie, Tony feels the time is right to drop him into the regular group. An encounter is arranged in which the other PCs and Eddie's lost PC meet in the wilderness and join forces (since they are on the same side). Eddie's PC will be reassigned to work with the PCs' recon group, and a new but experienced gamer is added to the campaign.

Running Eddie through the warm-up game works so well that Tony decides to use variations on it in the future to add new members to the group. He even sets up occasional short side missions for lone group members whose characters become greatly separated from the rest of the combat team, usually by being captured by the enemy or temporarily reassigned to a special mission.

Solo adventures are not difficult to design or carry out, though the limitations of having only one player must be carefully considered before the campaign gets underway. Next month, we take another trip through the Living Galaxy. Enjoy.

Sidekicks

Amusing Companions For Player Characters

The Network's contest to design a suitable sidekick for a hero yielded many varied and wondrous entries. The winners are presented below.

First Place, Mary Catelli, NY

Una
3rd Level Female Kobold Priest

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 16
DEX: 11
CON: 13
CHR: 14
AC: 8
Hit Points: 16
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Kobold, Common
THAC0: 20

Age: 15
Height: 2' 9"
Weight: 39 lbs
Eyes: Bright blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Club, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Fast talking (14), etiquette (14), appraisal (17), recorder (12), healing (14), herbalism (13)
Magical Item: *Shield +1*
Spells/Day: 4 3, plus *faerie fire*

As a specialty priest of Lathander, Una has major access to the spheres of All, Astral, Charm, Creation, Elemental, Healing, Plant, Sun, Weather and minor access to Combat, Divination, and Guardian. She can turn undead, turning those affected by direct sunlight as if she were a priest four levels higher. She has a bonus spell of *faerie fire*, which she can cast once a day.
Special Abilities: Infravision up to 60 feet, attack rolls suffer a −1 penalty in sunlight or similar conditions

Several years ago two young priests and a paladin of the Morninglord were captured by a band of kobolds and imprisoned in a hut. While the humans were waiting for their captors to deal with them, a young kobold girl snuck into the hut to chat.

"If I let you go, will you do something for me?" the girl posed.

The paladin prudently asked the nature of the favor.

"I want to be a priest of Lathander."

One of the priests cautiously offered to bring her to the temple where they could find out if she was able to follow Lathander's teachings. Una said that would be acceptable, and she gnawed on the ropes until the trio was free. The men honorably brought her to the temple, where the high priest, after hearing their story, set about trying to make Una a priestess. Much to everyone's surprise, he succeeded.

Una dedicated herself not only to her religious studies, but also to human culture. Her knowledge of human etiquette and her glib tongue have kept her out of all sorts of trouble.

Her rapid advance in levels has provoked many racist comments. But the priests of Lathander staunchly defend their little kobold sister. Recently, she managed to turn a vampire, and the high priest of the temple decreed that she should now go adventuring to help spread the news of Lathander.

The priests are searching for an open-minded band of adventurers to take Una under their collective wing. They would prefer a group who has a priest or paladin of Lathander in its ranks.

Una is bright-eyed, cheerful, and enthusiastic. Her joy and excitement seldom bubbles over into her speech. However, her actions are always animated.

She is fond of her recorder and will play it with little provocation. She is hoping to find a bard to teach her how to play more instruments. The kobold is content with her meager possessions. Still, she dreams of wearing a suit of armor and intends to save half the coins she gains adventuring until she has enough to pay for a suit in her size. The other half of the coins will go to the temple.

Una always dresses in priestly robes and carefully chooses clothing that does not make her look too ridiculous. Her friendship for the high priest who trained her is unfailing. She cherishes the *shield* he gave her and hopes someday to find a gift worthy for him.

Una hopes the adventuring band that takes her in will be kind and inquisitive, willing to check out unknown ruins and befriend creatures other adventurers might attack. She wonders why the high priest has decided she must travel while the other priests remain at the temple. Perhaps he means her to be a challenge to arrogant adventurers. Perhaps he truly wants her away from the temple and the other human priests. She tries not to dwell on these thoughts, but she hopes someday his motives will be revealed.

Second Place, Rogier van Widen, Netherlands

Coriander Chervil
1st Level Male Gnome Illusionist

STR: 10
INT: 16
WIS: 10
DEX: 16
CON: 12
CHR: 7 (10 with *change self)*
AC: 8
Hit Points: 4
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Gnomish, Common
THAC0: 20

Age: 86
Height: 3'
Weight: 86 lbs
Hair/Eyes: White/brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Brewing (19), cooking (19), herbalism (11)
Spells/Day: 1
Spellbook: *Detect magic, read magic, change self*

Coriander's nose dominates his life. It is too small. As a baby he was abandoned by his parents because of his tiny nose and brown eyes—both signs of a bad future according to gnomish legends. He was found and raised by a cheerful innkeeper named Albas Bolbas, who did not realize Coriander was a gnome until the youth did not grow beyond three feet.

Bolbas taught Coriander how to cook and clean the kitchen. The young gnome loved the inn's kitchen. It was a fine shelter against all those who laughed and joked about his nose. So he spent most of his years in the kitchen, practicing his culinary skills and brewing talents.

The inn grew famous over the years—all because of Coriander's fine dishes and heady ale. Many a celebrity came to the inn to taste the gnome's exquisite meals. One of these visitors was a wizard who was eager to meet the skillful but shy master cook. Reluctantly, Coriander agreed to chat with the mage.

The wizard immediately noticed the gnome's tiny nose and realized it was the reason the short man was such a recluse. The wizard said if Coriander would travel the world with him and teach him to cook, he would teach the gnome how to make his nose look bigger.

Of course Coriander agreed, leaving the inn and his adopted father Bolbas for the adventuring life. The *change self* spell the wizard taught him daily covers his tiny nose with a large, proud, bulbous one. This increased the gnome's sense of self-worth and gave him the confidence to move from one adventuring group to the next. He is always on the lookout for a new group to join so he can travel to new lands and add to his recipe collection.

If a group of player characters allows the gnome to accompany them, he will cook for the party and spice up their rations with his collection of herbs.

Having spent most of his life between the walls of the kitchen and the inn, Coriander is in his element in narrow dungeons and crumbling ruins. Although he is eager to travel the world and explore everything, he feels uncomfortable in vast spaces like grassy plains, deserts, and open fields.

Treasure to Coriander is new recipes, exotic herbs, and illusionist spells. He also has a fondness for diamonds. The little gnome will not embark on a quest without his cookbook, cooking utensils, a select amount of herbs, and a large cake of soap. A master chef, he is keen on cleanliness in the cooking area and will demand that his companions cleanse their hands and faces before enjoying a meal.

Deep in his heart Coriander hopes to meet his parents one day, although he hasn't the faintest idea who they are. Neither is he certain what he would do should he meet them—make them pay for his childhood misery or give them a great hug.

Third Place, Steven Townshend, OH

Geoffrey Skimplydough, The Dandelion

3rd Level Male Human Swashbuckler

STR: 13
INT: 15
WIS: 10
DEX: 17
CON: 14
CHR: 16
AC: 5
Hit Points: 21
Alignment: Chaotic Good
Languages: Common, Yeti
THAC0: 18

Age: 19
Height: 5', 10"
Weight: 157 lbs
Hair/Eyes: Golden/light brown

Weapon Proficiencies: Rapier, stiletto, dagger, short bow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Etiquette (16), tumbling (17), heraldry (15), gaming (16), disguise (15), dancing (17), blind-fighting

Born into nobility, Geoffrey Skimplydough was brought up sheltered and pampered. As a youth, he was weaned in the manners of the noble court and schooled in such graces as dancing, chivalry, and fencing.

Despite his surroundings and companions, Geoffrey differed from the prudish, self-absorbed noble families in that he possessed an insatiable curiosity of what stretched beyond the courtyard's gate. Determined to find a more diverse, interesting lifestyle, Geoffrey sneaked from his home on his 17th birthday, his only disguise a black scarf he tied about his nose and mouth.

Geoffrey soon learned there were men in the world who desired nothing more than to trod on others and steal from them. He was appalled at the discovery and set off earning the trust of the town monster, Robert the Sasquatch, a yeti. After befriending the lonely beast, Geoffrey spent many months learning the creature's language and customs. Then he devised a place to hide the yeti—beneath a concealed trap door in Geoffrey's basement.

Since the pair became good friends, the crime rate dropped. Half-dead would-be robbers described to city watchmen a King Dandy and his pet monster.

Geoffrey's alias has undergone several changes, from the original "King Dandy" to "Dandy Lion" to finally "Dandelion." He dresses in lavish outfits, wears a black mask, and always leaves behind a small bag of platinum pieces with a note attached reading, "Cleanup expenses."

Despite Geoffrey's combat skill and his repertoire of witty expressions, he still has his share of problems. Not long ago, he cheated at a dice game involving the incredible, inedible *Zwieback of Zymurgy* as the prize. The men who wagered the Zwieback were furious that a foppish nobleman dared to cheat them and have vowed they will not rest until Geoffrey's head is separated from his shoulders. This incident forced Geoffrey to leave town—Robert the Sasquatch stayed behind.

Geoffrey is seeking a person of great power with whom he can "tag along" until the Zwieback theft dies down.

Those who take in Geoffrey will discover him an unusual and annoying traveling companion. He delights in approaching small groups of orcs, kobolds, goblins, and the like and saying, "Ugh! is *that* what you look like?" He then proceeds to fight them blindfolded. ❑

The Living City

Myriad's Fencing School

by Lee Sheppard

Myriad's Fencing School has been in operation a little more than three years and has built a strong clientele. Customers range from middle-aged men looking for a new form of exercise to young people dreaming of becoming adventurers.

The business is just around the corner from Art's Haven (POLYHEDRON® Newszine #78) in the uptown section of Ravens Bluff. It is housed in a one-story renovated building with a newly-added walled exercise yard. The yard is open to the elements. A smaller covered exercise area is adjacent to the building and is used when the weather is unkind. All fencing classes are taught in the yards. No clients are allowed inside the building without an invitation.

Training in all basic weapon types is provided for warriors and rogues up to the fifth level of experience, with specialist training for warriors up to the seventh level of experience in the broad, long, and bastard sword. Although Myriad's is open every day for lessons, training is divided into basic weapons in the mornings and advanced skills in the afternoons. The business also can be booked for private evening training sessions.

The clients agree the prices are quite reasonable, considering Myriad's training ensures that level advancement occurs in half the time normally required. Fees are charged per hour, with most sessions running three hours. Those in advanced and specialist classes can purchase longer sessions.

Fee/Hour	Skill Level
1 sp	Novice
5 sp	Beginner
1 gp	Intermediate
3 gp	Advanced
10 gp	Specialist

Myriad's has never turned away a customer. Those who do not have the money to pay for classes work off their debt by cleaning the establishment and running errands for the instructors.

The Instructors

Myriad's Fencing School boasts two excellent instructors. The chief tutor is Myriad himself, a tall, handsome man. He is missing his right arm below the shoulder, and he explains to his students that he lost the limb while fighting a red dragon. Still, he teaches the advanced and specialist sessions, and his students claim Myriad's left arm is more than a match for both of theirs.

Rogues and less-experienced warriors are trained by the dwarf Dulanin Sternhelm, the school's other instructor.

Little is known of the two instructors before they came to Ravens Bluff and opened the fencing school. Conversations with the pair reveal only that they spent a number of years adventuring together far to the northwest until Myriad fought the red dragon. Myriad apparently is a nickname, as Dulanin sometimes can be heard calling his associate Paul, a slip of the tongue which bothers the master fencer. Aside from this occasional faux-pas, the two instructors obviously share a great friendship. They enjoy each others' company, and when there are no evening classes they while away the time in a local inn. Dulanin laughs heartily over mugs of ale and adventuring stories. It is clear to see Myriad is the more serious of the pair.

Rare patrons who are invited inside the building that adjoins the training yard discover that the instructors live simply. If the pair are making a tidy sum from their business, they are not spending it on personal comfort. Entering through the door that opens onto the exercise yard, the visitor finds himself in what appears to be a small office. The south wall contains a weapons rack filled with wooden and metal varieties of blades used for training. Two wooden chairs are the only furnishings.

The door to the east leads to the kitchen and lounge. A stone fireplace, complete with a large cooking pot, is found on the south wall of this room. Old but comfortable armchairs, a kitchen table, and a small bookcase, are the only pieces of furniture. A strong and lockable door in the east wall leads outside to the street.

The remaining two rooms are Myriad's and Dulanin's bedrooms. Both are sparsely furnished, with only a bed, wardrobe, and a sea chest in each. Under a loose floorboard beneath Myriad's bed is a small locked chest containing 30 gp, a gold signet ring worth 500 gp, and a holy symbol of the goddess Sune. A careful search of the wardrobe in Dulanin's room reveals a false compartment containing a glittering suit of *chain mail +3, a battle axe +3, shield +3,* and a *throwing axe +1.* The shield bears the image of a golden dragon, its head thrown back in anger. If the shield is touched by any other than Dulanin, the dragon head lets out a fierce roar that can be heard for blocks. Dulanin or Myriad will mete out swift retribution to any snoopers who trigger the shield.

A Lost Friend

Myriad's real name is Paul De Chambrier, a 12th level paladin and a devotee of the goddess Sune. He is a great warrior who has made it his purpose in life to seek out evil and destroy it whenever or wherever he encounters it. Paul's greatest claim to fame was the destruction of a number of evil dragons. His armor is made from the scales of those dragons he slew over the years. It was during one dragon-slaying adventure that he earned his nickname, Myriad. A companion said he wore a suit filled with a myriad of dragon trophies.

Less than four years ago, Paul's life was turned upside down. A close friend of his, Geoffrey De Polovois, a Sunite paladin, incited the wrath of the wizards of Zhentil Keep. Geoffrey was concerned for the safety of his family, and he wrote a letter to Paul and Dulanin, asking for the pair's assistance. On the way to help Geoffrey, Paul and Dulanin passed through a small town that was living in fear of a red dragon. The beast's constant hunting trips to kill cattle had devastated the community. Paul faced a terrible quandary. He could not refuse the pleas of the townsfolk, but he also knew that Geoffrey was in dire need of help. He finally chose to save the town

first—even though the dragon proved difficult to find and even more difficult to kill.

Dealing with the wyrm delayed the pair's arrival at Geoffrey's home by two weeks. The delay had tragic consequences.

Paul and Dulanin discovered that a half-dozen Zhentarim wizards and a beholder had attacked Geoffrey's stronghold, killing the paladin, his family, and his servants. Paul was crushed, and in his grief he became convinced that his vanity carried the price of his friend's life. He was certain that it was the chance to kill one more dragon that had proved the turning point in his decision to stay and help the townsfolk—which in turn lead to the late arrival of Paul and Dulanin.

Consumed with guilt and convinced that he no longer deserved to be called a paladin, Paul contacted a priestess of Sune and asked how he might redeem himself in the eyes of the goddess. The priestess told Paul he could not be redeemed until those who had killed his friend had been punished. The priestess then instructed Paul to travel to Ravens Bluff and wait for the one who would guide him to the foul Zhentarim. The "one" was described as a "left-handed man who wields his sword with a right-handed mastery." In simple terms, Paul believes he is looking for a man who was born naturally left-handed, but was forced to learn to wield weapons with his right hand—perhaps because of local custom or prejudice.

Moving to the Living City, Paul and Dulanin decided the best way to find the one they were looking for was to open a fencing school so they could more easily explain their interest in unusual fighting skills. They have been in Ravens Bluff for the past three years, still no closer to finding the one they seek. In staying with their personal philosophies, Paul and Dulanin keep only enough funds to meet their overhead. The remainder of the money is anonymously donated to various charities throughout Ravens Bluff.

Unknown to Paul and Dulanin, Sune's actual motives for sending the pair to the Living City was a test of faith. She desired to see how long he would follow her instructions and hold to his desire to avenge his friend. The goddess is pleased that he and Dulanin are training a number of adventurers, giving them skills better to combat evil. In her eyes Paul already has redeemed himself and again possesses all of the skills and attributes of a paladin.

The goddess also desired that Paul and Dulanin avoid slaying monstrous creatures and therefore keep a low profile. Sune is fond of the pair and wants them to avoid the attentions of the Zhentarim for a time.

Myriad, Paul De Chambrier

12th Level Male Human Paladin

STR: 18/32
INT: 12
WIS: 14
DEX: 14
CON: 17
CHR: 18
AC: −4
Hit Points: 108
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elvish, Gold Dragon
THAC0: 9

Age: 38
Height: 6'2"
Weight: 230 lbs
Hair/Eyes: Light Brown/Green

Weapon Proficiencies: Bastard sword (specialized), long sword, long bow, halberd, lance
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, direction sense (15), endurance, hunting (13), mountaineering (n/a), tracking (8)
Magical Item: *Dragon-scale armor +2, bastard sword +2/+4 vs. evil dragons, bag of holding*

Myriad is a serious soul who has a grim determination to succeed at his fencing school. He adopted the name Myriad when he left his adventuring career behind, and no one in the city except Dulanin knows his real name.

Despite what he tells his students, Myriad did not lose his arm to a red dragon. In fact, he hasn't lost his right arm—he keeps it hidden inside his *bag of holding* to disguise his appearance while he waits for the one who will take him to the Zhentarim. He believes his new guise will help hide him from his enemies until the time is right for him to strike. His armor and magical sword also are stored in the bag.

Myriad's dragon armor is composed of red, green, blue, and white dragon scales, intermingled with bronze links. The armor is specially enchanted, and while wearing it, Myriad suffers half damage from fire, gas, cold, and electrical attacks.

Dulanin Sternhelm

10th Level Dwarven Fighter

STR: 17
INT: 10
WIS: 10
DEX: 14
CON: 16
CHR: 12
AC: −2
Hit Points: 87
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Dwarven, Common, Kobold, Gnoll
THAC0: 11

Age: 93
Height: 4' 9"
Weight: 190 lbs
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Black

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe (specialized), throwing axe, military pick, rapier
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blacksmithing (17), blind-fighting, cooking (10), endurance (16), mining (7)
Magical Items: *Shield +3, chain mail +3, battle axe +3, throwing axe +1*

Dulanin has a wicked sense of humor, managing to see something funny in everything and every one. He enjoys food and drink, but he never consumes either to excess. Like all dwarves, Dulanin takes fighting very seriously, and he has developed his combat skills to a fine art. When meleeing, whether for real or to teach students, he is not flashy or rushed. He conserves his strength while his opponent tires, and he waits for the best opportunity to strike.

Dulanin thinks Myriad has been too hard on himself. While the loss of their friend was a great tragedy, the destruction of the red dragon saved the lives of many others. Dulanin is convinced that they made the right decision to fight the wyrm. Dulanin also is convinced that those responsible for the death of their friend deserve no mercy. And he takes great pleasure in keeping his battle axe sharpened for the day when their mission of revenge can be fulfilled.

Adventure Hooks

The player characters discover that Myriad's Fencing School is a great place to train and spar. By chance, one of the

Continued on page 31

Fantastic Memories

Warm Reflections Of The WINTER FANTASY™ Convention

by Paul F. Culotta

Well, the first pot of coffee is done, Todd and Shari are taking a nap, and a load of wash is merrily spinning. And here I am, reflecting upon a treasure trove of memories from the past few days spent in Milwaukee attending the Network's WINTER FANTASY Convention. For those of you who have not attended the convention, let me say that you are missing a treat.

How did this trip come about for the Culotta-Baughman clan? It was spontaneous—in a way. Todd Baughman, my favorite and only stepson, complained bitterly this past summer when he could not go to the GEN CON® Game Fair because of freshman orientation at college.

Anyway, after Shari and I dropped Todd off at school, we took off for the Game Fair. On the first day there the airlines started another price war. After some inquiry with a travel agent, we discovered that the window for discount flights included the WINTER FANTASY Convention dates. Considering that Todd had been so disappointed about the GEN CON Game Fair, and that we were not going to make the 1994 Game Fair because we're moving, and that the airline prices were reasonable, and that the Hotel Wisconsin had a great deal on rooms, we talked ourselves into a family Christmas present.

Out came the charge card and three round-trip tickets were quickly purchased.

Kevin Melka at Network HQ graciously allowed a rewrite of one of my DUNGEON® Adventures modules (Felkovic's Cat) to be sanctioned as a last-minute Network event. I was going to judge it. And Barbara Young, the editor of DUNGEON Adventures, agreed to give Todd, Shari, and myself a tour of TSR, Inc.

To top it off, the role-playing events looked interesting and promising. Yet there was a little uneasiness. This convention did not look as large and organized as the GEN CON Game Fair, and perhaps it would not run as smoothly. Well, we could hope. There was yet another reason to be nervous. Todd and I, the die-hard role-players, were lagging behind Shari in the family Network point contest. She had been rated recently as a Master level player, and she often reminded us of this fact. Time to catch up with Mom.

Thursday the 6th of January arrived, and we awoke a little worried about the trip. Barbara Young had called us the day before and warned us that a pile of snow had descended upon Wisconsin. We crossed our fingers, called the airline, and with a BIG sigh of relief, discovered that yes, the flight was still on and planes were able to land in Milwaukee. Off we went.

Barbara gave us a wonderful tour of TSR. I was surprised at how big it is. We started by getting visitor passes and following Barbara through a tube called the "Time Tunnel" and into the bowels of game design, writing, art, fun, and fantasy. I could go on for some time about the tour because I was astounded at all the glorious artwork and the friendly people who genuinely enjoyed what they were doing. We got to say hello to Roger Moore and meet Buddy, his pet teenager, and we all barely survived our system shock roll when we viewed Zeb Cook's office. Barbara had some "just for visitors" giveaways that she offered, and Todd and I gratefully loaded up (as if our suitcases weren't already packed like sardine cans).

We finally made it to the Hotel Wisconsin in Milwaukee and unpacked for the morrow. We reviewed our schedules and laid out warm clothes for the two-block trip to the Hyatt Regency.

Friday arrived and we woke up late. Yes, late. I firmly believe from my GEN CON Game Fair experience that no one should ever sign up to play in slot 1. As a rule, there is too much confusion, and it may take a while for the staff to work out last minute bugs. I find that it is best to use slot 1 to recon the area, see what is going on, confirm your plans, get event tickets, etc. Another advantage is you can get a good breakfast and fuel up for the day because once the gaming adrenalin starts going, you might not eat again for quite some time.

After said hearty breakfast, we briskly walked through the crisp Wisconsin air to the Hyatt (Shari took off with a bound, and Todd and I remember this jog in the cold as Mom's version of the Bataan Death March). When we got there, we had a few moments of panic. The staff had no record of registrations for Shari and Todd, but everything was sorted out.

Then came the big shock. No, there were no big booths and tickets and the like al a GEN CON Game Fair. Instead there were sign-up sheets, and it appeared that if you were not there at the very beginning, all the slots would be taken by early arrivals. Panic! And then there was confusion. We could not find the sign-up sheet for Bruce Nesmith's RAVENLOFT® game event in slot 7. It wasn't there. We visited the Dealers' Room (smaller than the Game Fair's, but with a lot of nice things), and then came back to the sign-up tables. Fortune smiled. There, taping a sign-up sheet to the table was Bruce himself. With my trusty snow boots of striding, leaping, and speed, I rushed over, waited for Bruce to finish taping, and then promptly put Todd, Shari, and myself as the first three player's for Bruce's event. This was better.

At noon, Todd and I started playing "Unnatural Selection," the BUGHUNTERS event, while Shari went off to the AD&D® game Feature, "Guardians of North Keep." The marshalling seemed pretty efficient.

I try to avoid playing with family members at the same table, but only one group for BUGHUNTERS filled, so Todd and I were stuck with each other. When the character sheets were passed out, it turned out that we were big Marine buddies, so that was OK. But my character, Fisk, was a brand new green member of UTRPF, rank private, who knew little. Frankly, it is hard for a career military officer of more than 20 years to play a private. It was going to be a stretch for my role-playing abilities. Adding to the challenge were the other players, one of whom was Don Bingle, a Network Paragon player who reputedly has more experience points than anyone else in the organization. Well, it looked like Todd and I would not gain much ground on Mom the Master player during this slot.

Slot 3 arrived and my stomach was growling. Off we went to the Team

event called "Runefire," a Vikings scenario. The other three players on our ad hoc team never showed up. We waited and waited. The DM went to search for them. Nothing. Criers were sent through the halls of the Hyatt. Nothing. Fortunately, I noticed that the table Wolfgang Baur (excellent writer and assistant editor of DUNGEON Adventures) was judging was a player shy, so I talked Todd into joining that table. The remainder of Todd's team were from the Player's Guild of Central Oklahoma. Shari and I grabbed a well-deserved meal.

Another fine point about the WINTER FANTASY Convention, there are no carts with MECCA food. You are forced to go to a restaurant and eat something nutritious (the point being that even the ware of a fast food establishment does not require a saving roll as does the stuff on the MECCA carts.)

During dinner, Shari and I compared notes. At her AD&D game Feature table in slot 2 she also played with some Bingles (Linda and Rich), as well as with Cyndi Bakke, another great role-player and tournament author. Shari's assessment was that she probably would not advance to the second round because the role-playing competition was quite stiff. Well, I thought, perhaps Todd and I did not lose any ground to Master Mom.

Slot 4 at 8 p.m. came. That was what I had been waiting for all day—the first round of my tournament, "Felkovic's Cat." I was a little nervous because I had judged for the Network only once before at a small convention in Virginia. I wanted the players to enjoy themselves. The chances were good that they would because the scenario accepted by DUNGEON Adventures, and the best DM I ever met—Sheldon Menery—had written some wonderful characters for it. Nevertheless, I was nervous, perhaps a little more than usual because Don Bingle himself had signed up to play.

What can I say except that I had a fantastic time. Everyone loved the adventure, and Don showed why he is a Paragon level player. He drew Terrin, the wanna-be-ranger-spy, who in my opinion was the toughest character to play. But Don came out with a perfect score. Scott and Marybeth Wygal also played excellently.

Day two of the convention arrived, and Todd and arose bright and early because we were scheduled to play "Curse of the Casket."

In slot 6 was the second first round running of "Felkovic's Cat," and again I was blessed with an eager and energetic group of players.

By this time the early breakfast Todd and I had eaten was long gone and starvation was setting in. Bless my beautiful wife, when I joined her and Todd at Bruce Nesmith's table, she had grabbed some sandwiches, fries, and salads from the Hyatt's restaurant and had it waiting for us. While we munched, we enjoyed experiencing firsthand the demonic mind of Mr. RAVENLOFT setting himself, and we endured round 1 of "In The Flesh." Let me say this about Bruce—we had two hyperactive young men at our table, and Bruce handled them superbly, letting them run into town and get trashed by the mob. I was amused when I got the player evaluation sheet, wondering how anyone could rate the author of such a tremendous adventure with anything less than a 5 in "knowledge of the scenario."

Next to slot 8, the final round of "Felkovic's Cat." All the players did fantastically well, and while Don captured first place, it was a close game. I structured the second round of "Cat" so it would end, unlike many other Network events where you don't end because time expires. And when I did end the adventure, the players had a grand look of horror and dismay on their faces.

My adrenalin was rushing so badly at the end (gee, I only had been gaming for 16 hours straight) that I felt compelled to visit the Hyatt's bar and have a few drinks (courtesy of Ken Ritchart—another great role-player who was buying for the whole crowd). I talked to Don, congratulating him on his superb performance, met Skip Williams, and had great conversations with Wolf, Teeuwyn, Craig, Mark the bounty hunter, and the other Central Oklahoma Viking comrades of Todd (who had been inducted as an honorary member). Shari felt pretty good about her performance in "Curse of the Casket" and thought she might advance. But neither Todd nor I cared at this point. All of us were having too much fun. We did not get back to our hotel room until well after midnight, and I was glad that the last slot of the convention would not start until 10 a.m. I took some aspirin and collapsed.

The final day appeared as bright and cold as the others had been. And after breakfast, we went on the final double time forced march to the Hyatt. I was set to play. I placed as an alternate in "Curse," being edged out by the ranger, dwarf, and Todd's fighter. But, per lesson learned at the GEN CON Game Fair, I knew that you ALWAYS show up if you're an alternate. Shari also advanced in "Curse," and was scheduled to play. We were all anxious to resume the experience point race.

As it turned out, the "ALWAYS show up if you are an alternate rule" applied at the WINTER FANTASY Convention as well. Because several finalists did not show up, and I got to play. This time I did not get put at the same table with a family member, and the judge of my group was none other than Randall Lemon.

After lunch (yes, there was time for lunch), we went to the awards ceremony. Everyone walked away a winner. Craig Petillo as "Running Wolf" grabbed first place from our BUGHUNTERS event, and Todd and I agreed it was well deserved. The Central Oklahoma Vikings came in second in the team competition, and they all (Todd included) roared Norse chants as their picture was taken.

But regardless of the prizes and the family experience point competition, here was the real bottom line: we were there to have fun, and fun is what we had. It really didn't matter whether Shari, Todd, or Paul won anything. Personal satisfaction and memories are what it's all about. Whether it is Don Bingle's dwarf using his *ring of shocking grasp* in a rather shocking way, or Todd shouting Viking chants, or hearing that more than $1,000 was raised to support the Milwaukee Zoo—all of those memories and many more will outlast the award certificates.

The friendships will be lasting because this was a much smaller gathering than the "Big One," the GEN CON Game Fair. We were able to interact, meet, and network with fellow gamers and writers on a much more personal basis. And again, there was no MECCA food. It will be a long time before I enjoy myself this much again. And I know that Todd will remember his Christmas present for a long, long time.

❑

Into The Dark

Seeds of Destruction

by James Lowder

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

Godzilla vs. Biollante

1989, 104 Minutes
Toho
Director: Kazuki Omori
Cast: Yunihiko Mitamura, Yoshiko Tanaka, Koji Takahashi
*****1/2**

After the successful resurrection of Godzilla in 1984, Toho conducted a story contest to muster ideas and interest for their next flick featuring the King of the Monsters. more than 5,000 entries were submitted. The winner, after some development by writer-director Kazuki Omori, became *Godzilla vs. Biollante.*

The decidedly overripe story stems from a plot to create a bacteria derived from Godzilla cells, a bacteria that will devour nuclear radiation. The villain here is an American biotech corporation, Bio-Major, which wants to use the bacteria to render nuclear weapons obsolete and thus upset the world's military balance. But the leaders of the oil-rich republic of Saradia also have plans for the Godzilla cells; they hope to use them to invent a super-strain of grain capable of growing in the desert. Of course, Bio-Major doesn't want this sort of competition for U.S. grain exports, so they blow up the Saradian super-grain laboratories.

All of this xenophobic folderol leads to the creation of a monster named Biollante, a gigantic mutated rose infused with both Godzilla cells *and* the soul of a woman killed during the American terrorist bombing of the Saradian lab. Godzilla, being King of the Monsters, can't tolerate this upstart terror and wades through Osaka to reach the inevitable showdown.

As with all the Godzilla films of the last decade, *Biollante* replaces the dopey, kid-friendly beasts with savage city-smashers. (I especially like the redesign of the Godzilla suit, which makes his muzzle and eyes much more frightening.) The movie also sports some terrific special effects sequences directed by Koichi Kawakita. Surprisingly, the VHS tape is letterboxed, which will allow you to watch the monster-inspired chaos in all its widescreen glory.

The Omori-directed sequences are much more of a mixed bag. The scientist-heroes are rather dull, with Koji Takahashi turning in a disappointingly cold and dispassionate performance as Dr. Shiragami, creator of Biollante. Countering this tedium is an intriguing subplot focusing on the Special Defense Forces, which exists solely, it seems, to repel the various atomic horrors that wade up onto Japan's shores. The movie is also filled with great glimpses of what mundane life would be like in a monster-infested Japan. More of this, and less of the xenophobia and the typical preaching about science-gone awry, would have made the film a real winner.

From Hell It Came

1957, 71 Minutes
Allied Artists/Warner
Director: Dan Milner
Cast: Tod Andrews, Tina Carver, Linda Watkins
***1/2**

Welcome to the atoll of bad acting.

From Hell It Came is a pretty typical specimen of late 50s monster flicks, with the standard heroic scientists who dabble in things they shouldn't, the sappy romance (motivated by the enlightened concept that woman aren't normal unless they're married), and the vengeful creature born of nuclear fallout. It's also typical in that it dredges pretty deep into the pool of possible monsters for Tabanga, the ent with an attitude.

When Chief Kimo accepts the aid of the American scientists visiting his South Seas island, his rival for the throne leads a revolt and has him killed. Kimo vows revenge, and soon he's sprouting up from his grave as a man-sized tree with a perpetual angry scowl. As if having a grumpy tree in the graveyard weren't bad enough, the scientists dig up the creature (called Tabanga by the natives) and experiment on it until it's healthy enough to escape from their lab and go on a killing spree!

From Hell It Came can boast a certain crude appeal. Tabanga is hardly frightening as it lumbers (ugh) along, bottom lip moving as if the tree-beast were muttering to itself. Yet the big T is successful as a monster in the same fashion as the outrageous things in the Marvel/Atlas comics of the day. (In fact, Tabanga has a woody, space-born relative in Groot, the monster from Planet X.) The creature was designed by Paul Blaisdell, who also did work on a slew of other 50s sf flicks, including *Invasion of the Saucer Men* and *It Conquered the World.*

But even at a slim 71 minutes, *From Hell it Came* grinds on tediously if you don't have someone to laugh along with you at the ridiculous dialogue—which is rife with such poetic phrases as "fiendish, unholy devil dust"—and the absurd action scenes, including one of the worst knife fights in the history of film.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

1956, 80 Minutes
Allied Artists
Director: Don Siegel
Cast: Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, Carolyn Jones
******1/2**

Film scholars have filled a lot of pages rambling on about the possible political and psychological subtexts for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.* Books such as Vivian Sobchack's *Screening Space* and Patrick Lucanio's *Them or Us* discuss the film as a representation of the war between man's intellect and his emotions, a cry against conformity in the blandness of Eisenhower's America, and a clever warning against the evils of communism.

For those of you not part of the Critical-Theory-of-the-Month Club (special this week on the works of Derrida and his pals, get 'em before they deconstruct!), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a solid sf story of aliens taking over the small town of Santa

Mira, California. Dr. Miles Bennell (Kevin McCarthy) returns from a conference to find the town suffering from an outbreak of strangeness, with various people claiming that someone close to them is not really who they appear to be, that these loved ones have been replaced by emotionless duplicates. The doctor discovers at about the halfway point in the film that the suspicions were correct—alien pods are duplicating the townsfolk and disposing of the originals.

A long and chilling chase follows, as the doctor and the few people he can trust try to outsmart the pod people and escape Santa Mira to get help. This half of the film really buzzes along under the ace direction of Don Siegel, who had a long and profitable career in action films. In addition to *Body Snatchers,* Siegel helmed such disparate films as *Dirty Harry,* the Elvis Presley western, *Flaming Star,* and the 1964 film, *The Killers,* with Ronald Reagan as a vicious crime boss. This was also Reagan's final acting role (in movies, anyway).

If *Body Snatchers* stands up well under all the rigorous academic prodding and probing, it has as much to do with the absurd critical theories being applied to the film as with its essential content. In the end, the movie succeeds because its main conceit—that people you think you know, people you love and trust, are somehow not really trustworthy (and perhaps not even human)—strikes a chord of terror in most of us. If you want to chalk that up to clever manipulation of archetypes, have a ball. Just don't expect most sane people to want to read about it for fifty pages.

Watch for Carolyn Jones (Morticia of TV's "Addams Family") as the writer's wife and Sam Peckinpaugh (yes, the one who directed the classic blood-soaked western, *The Wild Bunch*) in a cameo as a meter reader. Peckinpaugh also did some uncredited work on the script, which is based upon a Jack Finney novel originally serialized in *Collier's.*

A 76-minute version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* exists on VHS; this shorter version does not include the prologue and stupid upbeat epilogue the studio forced upon the film before its initial release. This preferred version ends with a bedraggled and half-insane McCarthy standing in the middle of a busy freeway, shouting "You're next!"

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

1978, 115 Minutes
United Artists/MGM
Director: Philip Kaufman
Cast: Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Jeff Goldblum, Leonard Nimoy
***

Philip Kaufman, director of the 1978 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* has an interesting and wildly varied filmography. He's helmed mediocre action flicks—*The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* and *The White Dawn*—but he has also served as writer-director for such superior films as *The Right Stuff, The Unbearable Lightness of Being,* and the controversial *Henry & June.* Kaufman's lack of success with traditional action programmers, and his talent for intense, thoughtful movies, is probably a good indication as to why his remake of the classic sf film lacks the emotional impact of its predecessor.

Like the original *Body Snatchers,* Kaufman's story begins with a slow, carefully paced build of tension, as Dr. Bennel (now an inspector for the San Francisco Board of Health) and cohorts discover that something strange is going on in the city. The heroes even discover their first half-formed pod person at 40 minutes into the film, just like the 1956 version.

Here the two films diverge, and not for the better. Whereas the action-minded Don Siegel drove the original film along at a breakneck pace, wrapping it up in a compact 80 minutes, Kaufman continues the staid, careful pacing of the movie's first half. The new *Body Snatchers* boasts some improvements on familiar sequences—the growth of the pods at Bennell's house and his discovery that the aliens have taken control of the phone company stand out especially. But overall, the extra 35 minutes Kaufman spends on the "chase" harm the story more than help it.

The setting for the update also robs the film of a great deal of its impact. When the pods took over Santa Mira, each new conquest was a blow against the hero, since he knew—and cared about—almost everyone in town. Bennell the health inspector inhabits a huge city where he is already alienated (a disgruntled cook smashes his windshield early in the film). The horror he feels is more philosophical, a shock at the callousness of his fellow men both before and after the pods take over.

This isn't to say Kaufman's *Body Snatchers* doesn't have anything to recommend it. The cast is quite strong, with Donald Sutherland giving a solid turn as Dr. Bennell, Jeff Goldblum adding the proper touch of 70s anti-government paranoia to his portrayal of writer Jack Bellicec, and Leonard Nimoy creating a great aura of menace around himself as a bestselling pop psychologist who dismisses everyone's fears with pat phrases and silly self-help jargon. The film also shines in the sequences where Kaufman manages to escape the boundaries established by the original, as in the epilogue, where we get a glimpse of life within the Health Department offices after the invasion is complete.

Watch for a brief, but very strange cameo by Robert Duvall. Director Don Siegel appears as a cab driver, and the first Dr. Bennell, Kevin McCarthy, shows up for an inspired—and quite chilling—tie to the original. The latter makes the film worth renting all by itself.

Seedpeople

1992, 87 Minutes
Full Moon/Paramount
Director: Peter Manoogian
Cast Sam Hennings, Andrea Roth, Bernard Kates
*

Full Moon does *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.*

What? You want me to say something else about this dreary bunch of cliches? It's bad enough I have to watch these mind-numbing time-wasters, but writing about them in any sort of detail is just like living through them a second time! Man, you people are really heartless.

Tom Baines, a geologist with the State Geodesic Survey, returns to Comet Valley for a lecture but discovers that something strange is going on. People claim that their loved ones are—wait for it—acting strangely, like—we can all say this part together—emotionless duplicates. Could it be that the strange meteorites that have been pelting the valley aren't meteorites? Could they be—oh, I don't know—SEED PODS?

Of course they are, and veteran Full

Continued on page 31

Conventions

VilleCon 6, April 15-16
Maryville, MO
Fellowship of the Tower announces that Villecon 6 will be held in the Northwest Missouri State Conference Center. Planned games include the AD&D® game, Paranoia, TORG, Star Wars, Ghostbusters, DC Heroes, Warhammer 40K, GURPS, and many more, including a Benefit tournament. For further information and pre-registration, contact Fellowship of the Tower, P.O. Box 264, Maryville, MO 64468.

Americon, April 16-17
Clayton/Franklinville, NJ
A weekend of fun and excitement will be held at the Clayton American Legion Hall on the Clayton/Franklinville border. Events include the AD&D game, Werewolf, Mummy, Mage, Kult, the RAVENLOFT® setting, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, Battletech, AD&D game Trivia, and more. Special game sessions include an AD&D game Benefit tournament for the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, an RPGA® Network RAVENLOFT game, and arena combat battles all weekend long. Other events include an art show, a miniature painting contest, an auction, open gaming, and trial runs of new RPGs. Pre-registration to March 15 is $11 per day. Most game fees will be $2 per game, except the $5 Benefit event. Registration at the door is $12 per day. RPGA Network members receive a $1 refund with proof of membership. For more information, call Carl "Thunder" at (609) 589-0556, or write Americon, c/o Carl "Thunder," P.O. Box 125, Mullica Hill, NJ 08012.

Phammercon '94, April 16-17
Los Angeles, CA
This convention will be held near the campus of UCLA in Los Angeles. The 16th is SF day, with panels, special guests, and Japanimation viewings. The 17th is gaming day, with the AD&D game, Cosmic Encounters, unstacked Magic: The Gathering, and other tournaments. This convention is absolutely FREE! For more information, write to: Thuong Pham, 500 Landfair Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024, or call: (310) 208-1722.

Andromeda One, April 22-24
Lincoln, NE
This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn at 141 N. 9th Street, and convention activities include RPGs, dealers' room, 24-hour video room, art show, and panel discussions. Guest of Honor: Katherine Kurtz. For more information, write to Duane Bouchard, 2848 S. 17, Lincoln, NE 68502, Compuserve 71762-1564.

DemiCon V, April 22-24
Des Moines, IA
The Adventurers of Central Iowa are organizing gaming at DemiCon again this year, with even more space and around-the-clock gaming. This convention will be held at the Midwest Convention Center off I-80/35 and Merle Hay Road in Des Moines. Tournament events include the AD&D game, Paranoia, Champions, Battletech, the Assassination game, live action role-playing, and other events. Special Guests include Glen Cook, David Lee Anderson, and Rusty Hevelin. Also: costume contests, dealers, dramatic performances, and art shows. For more information, contact the Adventurers of Central Iowa, 1304 Boyd Street, Des Moines, IA 50316. Or call: (515) 266-2358.

Kulcon II, April 22-24
Lawrence, KS
Come see Lawrence's only gaming and comic book convention, held at the Lawrence Holiday Inn off I-70. Visit with our gaming and comic book guests, then play the AD&D game, Champions, an interactive Call of Cthulhu, Cyberpunk, Vampire, Star Wars, Star Trek, Star Fleet Battles, two Living City events, a Feature, a Masters, and a RAVENLOFT Benefit by Bruce Nesmith. Also running are board, strategic, and miniature games. Attend our charity auction, autograph sessions, seminars, dealers' room, game demos, and art show. Pre-registration is $17 with a $2 discount for Network and KUGAR members. For information, write to: Kulcon c/o KUGAR, 400 Kansas Union, Lawrence, KS 66045.

Pointcon XVII, April 22-24
Westpoint, NY
This historical, science fiction, and role-playing convention will be held at the United States Military Academy in West Point. Events include the AD&D game, Battletech, Shadowrun, Micro-Armor, Warhammer Fantasy 40K, Johnny Reb, and many more role-playing strategy, and board games. RPGA Network-sponsored events will be highlighted during the convention. Other events include a dealers' room, computer gaming, miniature painting contest, and open gaming. Registration is $12 at the door and $10 if pre-registered by mail. There are no event fees. Write to USMA Wargames Committee; ATTN: POINTCON XVII, P.O. Box 2666, West Point, NY 10997.

Briscon '94, April 30-May 2nd
Brisbane, Australia
This convention features many Network events, board games, wargames, an art competition, animation videos, medieval martial displays, a charity auction, trade stalls, and more. For registration and other information, contact Chris Ryan at +61-7-8708156.

Kubla Khan 22, May 13-15
Nashville, TN
Kubla Khan is a premier party convention at the Club House Inn at 920 Broadway in Nashville. The con features include a dealer's room, art show, masquerade, dance, and expanded gaming, including RPGA Network events such as AD&D game Feature, Masters, Grand Masters, and Marvel Superheroes events. Other events include Chill, Shadowrun, Paranoia, and more. Pre-registration is $25 before May 1, $35 after. For more information or registration, contact: Khen Moore, 647 Devon Drive, Nashville, TN 37220. Or Call: (615) 832-8402. GMs contact: Doc Couch, 3211 Orleans Drive, Nashville, TN 37212.

3-Rivers Game Fest '94, May 27-30
Pittsburgh, PA
Andon Unlimited is proud to announce its newest convention. This four-day convention, to be held at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott Hotel, will feature many RPGA Network events (including

first-run AD&D game and Shadowrun tournaments), a Puffing Billy Tournament run by Mayfair Games, lots o' board games, and more miniatures than you can shake a stick at! Please note that this four-day convention runs over Memorial Day weekend. Pre-reg weekend badges are $17.95. Write to Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 3100, Kent, OH 44240. Or call: (800) 529-EXPO (outside Ohio) or (216) 673-2117 (Ohio and international).

Illinicon '94, June 3-5
Urbana, IL
The Urbana Gaming House invites you to attend this convention held at Hendrick House dormitory on the campus of the University of Illinois. This convention features the AD&D game, Shadowrun, Vampire, Battletech, Star Fleet Battles, Eurorails, and many more events, including RPGA Network-sanctioned tournaments. Don't miss the open gaming, free movie lounge, game auction, miniature painting contest, prizes, and dealers. Free parking, nightly accommodations (air-conditioned) at $12/night, and on-site food service. Free events on Friday night. Admission is $5 for the weekend, and $3 gets you into all of the events. GMs needed. For more information, send a SASE to: Urbana Gaming House, 904 West Green, Box 1801, Urbana, IL 61801.

Wyvercon '94, June 17-19
Mount Vernon, WA
This convention will be held at the Skagit County Fair Grounds. Featured events include an RPGA Network AD&D game tournament, a LaserTag arena, and a Saturday night dance. Other events include Battletech, Boffer Chess, a Lost Souls game, 24-hour open gaming, martial arts demos, a miniatures contest, costume contest, dealers' room, on-site food vendors, and more. Camping and RV spaces are available. Pre-registration through May 31 is $15 for the weekend. On-site registration is $20 for the weekend. Send registration fees or inquiries to: Skagit Valley Gamers Association/Wyvercon '94, P.O. Box 2325, Mount Vernon, WA 98273, or call: (206) 855-0197 and ask for Todd or Larianne.

QuinCon IX, July 15-17
Quincy, IL
A fantastic mix of role-playing, miniature games, and board games featuring RPGA Network tournaments, special guests, and a Saturday auction. Nearly 70 events, featuring both new games and classic favorites. No game fees. For more information, send a SASE to QUINCON IX, c/o Mark Hoskins, 1181 Pratt Street, Barry, IL 62312. Admission fees are $5 for one day or $12 for the weekend.

DragonCon, July 15-17
Atlanta, GA
DragonCon is a multi-media gaming convention which crosses over into science fiction and fantasy, with broad ranges which extend to books, art, film, computer animation, special effects, and music. More than 8,000 fans and 500 retailers attended our 1993 Convention. Events include more than 250 hours of role-playing, miniature, board, and computer gaming tournaments with pre-registration for individual events, including a $1,000 AD&D Game Team Tournament and a $1,000 Tournament of Champions Board Game event. Additional gaming events include a 24-hour open gaming room, live role-playing events, and consignment game auctions. Pre-registration: Weekend passes good for all three days are $35 prior to March 15, and $40 prior to June 15. Memberships are available at the door for $45, with children six and under admitted free of charge. Special club discounts and day passes are also available. For more information, call the 24-hour info/fax line at (404) 925-2813, or call the DragonCon office at (404) 925-0115. Or write: DragonCon '94, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362-0696. Three-day registration is also available using Visa, MC, or AMEX by calling Ticketmaster at (404) 249-6400 through July 15.

Grand Game Con, July 15-17
Grand Rapids, MI
This convention will be held at the American Legion Post #179 at 2327 Wilson SW in Grand Rapids, MI. We are having dealers and the following gaming events: RPGA Network tournaments, the AD&D game, Amber, GURPS, Star Wars, Space Marines, Cyberpunk, Vampire, Battletech, Call of Cthulhu, Torg, Civil War, Warhammer, Shadowrun, Napoleonics, Thunderbolt WWII, Rail Barons, Starfleet Battles, and more. Doors open at 8:30 a.m., events start at 9:00 a.m.
Pre-registration before May 31 is $6 for one day, $12 for both days. Admission at the door is $7 per day. For more information contact: John Edelman, 321 Carlton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. Judges contact: Leon Gibbons, 13910 Olin Lakes Road, Sparta, MI 49345.

July's Joust II, July 23-24
UNAM University, Mexico
This convention will be held at the Science Faculty at UNAM University. We will offer AD&D game and Call of Cthulhu tournaments, as well as costume, miniatures, and art contests. Pre-registration is required for the tournaments. For further information and registration, write to: Adrian Gomez, Vicente Equia 50, Col. Tacubaya, Mexico D.F. 11850, Mexico. Or call in Mexico: (915) 516-75-50. From the US, call: (011525) 516-75-50.

GEN CON® Game Fair, August 18-21
Milwaukee, WI
Join more than 20,000 gamers at the world's largest multi-media game fair featuring four days of events. The festivities include computer, military, role-playing, strategy, miniatures, virtual reality, video, arcade, and board games—more than 1,000 events in all.

The GEN CON game fair is also the place to find RPGA Network events. Everything from multi-round events to Living City tournaments. More than 20 Network events will be available, with terrific prizes given out to the winners. Network members will receive points for playing and judging.

The game fair also features a million-dollar art show, dozens of celebrities, a costume contest, Star Trek guests, comic-book artists, Japanimation, a 200-booth exhibit hall, and $10,000 in prize giveaways. For more information, write to: GEN CON Game Fair, P. O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

❑

Classifieds

Attention All Con Organizers: The Living City Character database is going strong! If you run Living City events at your convention, you'll need copies of the Living City character registration forms from HQ. Distribute them at the beginning of all Living City events, and collect them with the score sheets. Then send the registration forms only—not the score packets—to Don Weatherbee at: 86A Dafrack Drive, Lake Hiawatha, NJ 07034. Be sure to send the scoring packets back to HQ as usual.

Attention Game Companies: I am looking for a publisher for Conflict of the Dawn, an RPG of primitive (including Stone Age) life. The game allows for "modern" primitives, ice age, anachronistic prehistoric (i.e., cave men and dinosaurs together), and prehistoric fantasy campaigns. I can send copies in ASCII format immediately. Interested parties contact: Gregory W. Detwiler, R.D. 2 Box 70, Williamsburg, PA 16693. Or call: (814) 832-2575.

California: Would like to start an AD&D® game campaign in the Lompoc/Santa Maria area. Please contact Steven Bess at (805) 735-7460. Let's get something started!

For Sale: DRAGON® Magazines #60-present, many AD&D game, Basic, and expert D&D® game modules, all AD&D game books including first print of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ tome. Also a few collectors' items such as an expert set still in original plastic. For a list, send a SASE to: Craig Cunningham, 2900 B Ligon Street, Raleigh, NC 27607.

For Sale: AD&D game trading card set minus the following cards: #108, 251, 298. 1992 AD&D game trading card set minus #365, 622, 640, 643, 663, 671, 673, 680, 684, 692, 703, 710, 716, 738-743, 746-750. 1993 series I complete set. Also I6 RAVENLOFT® module, I3-5 Desert of Desolation series, H2-4 Bloodstone, AD&D game Fiend Folio hardcover, Legends and Lore, Monster Manual II, City of Greyhawk boxed set, DRAGONLANCE® Adventures hardbound, Greyhawk Adventures, C6 Official RPGA® Network Tournament Handbook, DLC1 DRAGONLANCE Classics Volume 1, GAMMA WORLD® game boxed set, STAR FRONTIERS™ and NIGHT HAWKS game boxed sets, Marvel Super Heroes series I, II, and III trading card sets and more. Send SASE for price list and condition to: Robert S. Morris Jr., 463 E. 3rd Street, Harbor Springs, MI 49740.

For sale: 15-year collection of fantasy gaming materials. Near complete run of DRAGON Magazine, Strategic Review, White Dwarf to #90. First edition DEITIES & DEMIGODS tome, old modules and role-playing games. Call Vince at: (209) 233-0237, days.

General: Having trouble finding gamers who play the same games or use the same system as you? Don't have the time, skill, or patience to develop your own adventures? Like to play different gaming genres that don't require masses of background information? Then perhaps I can help you. If you would like more information with no obligation, send a self-addressed envelope and two international reply coupons to: Bravo Seven Games, 118 Forest Lakes Drive, Thornlie 6108 Western Australia.

General: Dragonslayers Unlimited is looking for new members. We are a registered Network club with more than 60 members in the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and Sweden. We are dedicated to playing games by mail; many club members offer AD&D games, Marvel Super Heroes, Shadowrun, and others. if you appreciate play-by-mail gaming, Dragonslayers Unlimited might be for you. Write to Jil Conway, Rt 6, 3001 Johnson Lane, Columbia, MO 65202-8510. All inquiries welcome.

General: I am interested in purchasing a print of *Valshea* by Keith Parkinson. It was the cover of DRAGON Magazine issue #106 published in February 1986. Write to: Daniel Hill, 3677-D Washington Avenue, Great Lakes, IL 60088. Call: (708) 689-2102.

General: Gamers and horror/sf fans! A brand new magazine has emerged from the convention line of predecessors. The Asgardian is a bi-monthly magazine covering a variety of topics in the role-playing, horror, and sf genres. For subscription or other information, send a SASE to: Asgard Productions, 14525 Vose Street Suite #3, Van Nuys, CA 91405-3010.

General: Selling large collection of DRAGON Magazines. All in good to very good condition. For prices, send SASE to Tim Shimek, 550 Bowhall Road, Painesville, OH 44077.

General: Do you have a character you've always wanted to see drawn? Now's your chance. Send me your character sheet with a description of your PC, along with at least $1 Canadian, and I'll send you a color rendition of your character about a month later. Write to: James Desart, 422 de Bouleaux, otterburn Park, Quebec, Canada, J3H 4B2.

General: Wanted: Any sourcebooks or adventure modules for the DC Heroes RPG. I am also looking for the AD&D game DARK SUN® and DRAGONLANCE campaign setting products. If you own any of these and are willing to part with them, contact: Breck, 3711 Bratton Court, Sugarland, TX 77479.

General: The Gamer's Connection is a bi-monthly small press publication for RPG fans. Features include articles, gaming tiips, NPCs, con info, upcoming releases, product reviews, and more! We have readers from coast to coast and as far away as Austrailia and Israel. The best submission each issue wins a prize (up to $30 value). TGC is just $15 for one year (6 issues), or $2 for a sample copy. Send a check or money order to M.T.A. Graphics, P.O. Box 278331, Sacramento CA 95827.

General: Wanted: LC1 Gateway to Ravens Bluff, LC2 Inside Ravens Bluff, LC3 Nightwatch, LC4 Port of Ravens Bluff, Judges Guild module Inferno, DUNGEON® Magazine issues 1-8, Grenadier 24mm boxed Star Wars miniature sets, boxed DC Heroes miniatures sets, FASA metal Star Trek ships, other minis and models. Christopher Allen, 2209 Silverthorn, Flower Mound, TX 75028.

General: Are you looking for a PBM gaming club? join the Kights of Chaos! We aren't an RPGA Network club yet, but with more members we can become one. Membership is $5, but that will go up in a few months. You will have a chance to help create a PBM gaming system. To join or for information, write to: Steve Fletcher, 510-C West Harbison Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15205.

General: GAREMAG is out there! Your local gaming experience is a bi-monthly magazine that caters to gamers, hobbyists, wargamers, and comic collectors. GAREMAG actively seeks submissions of artwork, articles, product reviews, and more. We also promote independent comics, homegrown game systems, and other supplements. So if you've got something worth looking at, send us your stuff. Into our second year, we cover all gaming genres. For submission guidelines or subscription information, send a SASE to: GAREMEAG, c/o Ken R. Auliffe, Editor, P.O. Box 21058, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada N3C 4B1.

General: Wanted: Used extra copies of D&D® and AD&D game books, magazines, and other books pertaining to medieval history. Please send price lists or give-aways to: Kathy Bayles, President, The Guild of the Elven Blue Mage, P.O. Box 1675, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

General: Guilds of Honor wishes to expand. It is a PBM gaming system, not a Network club. Setups is free, each turn is $5. For each person who joins, you get two free turns. Entire clubs may join. Tell them the Knights of Chaos sent you. Contact: Alternate Entertainment, Inc., P.O. Box 207, Ely, MN 55731.

General: Wanted: SSI's DM Assistant Volume I (program with monster lists). Will pay reasonable price if complete and in good condition. Also selling Eye of the Beholder (mint, $35) and Vengeance of Excalibur (used, $13). Write to: Chris Perry, 23309 Richfield Road, Corning, CA 96021-9770.

General: For Sale: Large collection of DRAGON Magazines from issue #50 to #110, with duplicates available. Send a want list along with a SASE for a current price list. Also buying issues 60 and below. For a breakdown of what I'm paying, send a list of what you have to: Michael Cox, 123 Louis Street, Apt. B, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

General: I wish to buy certain D&D and AD&D game products. Please send reasonable price lists or an SASE for my want list to: Tommy Rainey, 49 Spruce Street Box 299, Langley AFB, VA 23665.

General: We are interested in contacting other gaming clubs in the Pittsburgh area interested in building a local gaming network. Our Agenda includes the publication of a monthly newsletter or magazine, networking local gamers with clubs in their areas, and sponsorhip of a Pittsburg-based gaming convention. We also have some openings available for our 1994 AD&D game Winter Campaign for those who are interested. No one under 18, please. Send SASE to: The Dungeoneers Gaming Society, c/o Jennifer Matire, 1755 Potomac Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15216-1948 or call (412) 343-6226.

General: For Sale: DRAGON® Magazine, sold in the following groups as batches: A (#41, #43, #45-#47, Best of DRAGON Magazine Volume II), B (#52-#59), C (#50, #53, #64, #69, #72, Fineous Cartoon Treasury), D (#61-#67), E (#68-#72 inclusive, Best of DRAGON Magazine Volume II). Submit bids, including $3 for shipping, to Mike Carr, 976 S. Waterville road, Oconomowoc, WI 53066.

Illinois: I am an experienced player in the Chicagoland area looking for other local players or groups to play the AD&D game. I also want to learn other types of role-playing games and to meet other serious, experienced, and inventive players. If you are interested, please contact: David Tomita, 235 South 8th Avenue, La Grange, IL 60525. Or call: (708) 354-1128.

Massachusetts: I am a 14-year-old AD&D game DM/Player looking for more games in my area. I have just started DMing a RAVENLOFT campaign and am willing to play in any campaign world. Also, I'd love to join a club. Contact: Jon Celli, P.O. Box 162, Dover, MA 02030.

Mexico: Se buscan jugadores de DUNGEONS & DRAGONS que vivan en el area de la bahia Acapulco o Ixtapa. Si estas interasado, llamanos al 85-08-68 por la tarde.

Minnesota: I am a 14-year-old looking for a club or gaming group to join. I have materials to play the AD&D 2nd Edition game, but I would be willing to play GURPS, Rifts, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, or other games. contact: Ben Anderson, 2450 Hidden Valley Lane, Stillwater, MN 55082.

New Jersey: Nineteen-year-old gamer looking to start or join a gaming campaign in the Atlantic City area. Am willing to play any game system. Contact: Ben Sluzenski, 1000 East Shore Drive, Brigantine, NJ 08203. Call: (609) 266-0067.

New York: Anyone in the Westchester County Area, I need you! My friend and I are in desperate need of a DM. We could also use more players. If you are around the age of 12 and play the D&D or AD&D games, please contact me! Willing to join or form a group. My friends and I are OK players and are more than willing to learn more about the games. Call: (914) 238-3612, or write to: 75 Mt. Peak Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514.

Ohio: I'm a 13-year-old gamer trying to start a club in the Cleveland area. The club is meant for anyone between the ages of 8 and 16, and I need five more Network members. If you are interested, please send a SASE to: 5051 West 148 Street, Brook Park, OH 44142. Or call Tony at: (216) 265-8922.

Oklahoma: Wanted: Network members living in the Tulsa/Stillwater region. Recently moved back from Dallas, I'm suffering severe gaming withdrawal! My love is the AD&D game, but I'll play any type of RPG. Help me, please, before it's too late!

Pennsylvania: Wanted: Mature playtesters (that's attitude, not age) for an AD&D game tournament-like module. I am preparing it for submission to TSR. Module is rated for 6-8 characters (provided) of levels 4-6. I also have an ongoing AD&D game variant campaign. Call (215) 565-7303 if interested. I am located near Philadelphia in Delaware County (Media).

Pennsylvania: Seeking adult (18 and up) players in Reading area for AD&D game sessions. Our group has been playing weekly since 1979, but we are losing players due to job transfers etc. If interested, phone (610) 375-2032 and leave a message.

Play-By-Mail: You are a hardy

adventurer and, by mistake, you have journeyed to the icy mountains of KRUEL. you discover by chance the terrible secret this land holds. Do you have what it takes to survive? Play KRUEL and find out! Send inquiries to: KRUEL, P.O. Box 876, New Hamburg, Ontario, Canada, N0B 2G0.

Texas: DM/player looking for gamers in the Dayton/Liberty area or the Nome/Sour Lake/China areas. I DM the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting and will play in any. Contact: Richard M. Stauss, P.O. Box 175, Nome, TX 77629.

Trading Cards: Complete sets of 1993 gold series; separate sets of 1993 gold series Part I, rare 1993 foils, prism, and emerald cards; rare 1993 ruby sets; 1992 gold series; 1991 Part II gold series; 1991 gold series 737 cards and all promos; over 10,000 cards for trade. Send buy and sell list to: JM Kittrell, 2915 LBJ #161 Dallas, TX 75234. Call: (214) 530-6251. FAX: (214) 888-0220.

Trading Cards: Will trade extra '93 cards for 1991 cards. For list, write to: Dennis J. DeBalso, 65 Fox Hill Lane, Enfield, CT 06082. Or call: (203) 253-9568.

Tri-State Roleplaying Championship: Earn double points for GMs and players with prizes and trophies awarded at the GEN CON® Game Fair awards ceremony. Count your best four scores from seven conventions, including AndCon, U-Con, Pentacon, Con Games, CapCon, MageCon, and Michicon. Play in such diverse game systems as the AD&D game, Call of Cthulhu, and the AMAZING ENGINE™ game. For more information, contact the Tri-State Roleplaying Championship at P.O. Box 71, Dayton, OH 45401, or call: (513) 222-GAME.

Virginia: LORE is looking for interested gamers in the Shenandoah Valley area! We meet weekly for board games and RPG one-shots and mini-campaigns. Currently, we are playtesting a brand new game due to be released in late 1994 by Avalon-Hill. LORE is also interested in trading newsletter subscriptions with other Network clubs. Write to: 1228 Goldfinch Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

Wisconsin and USA: I have a user-friendly BBS that may interest you gamers with modems. It will offer online role-playing and all other aspects of online services: e-mail, bulletin boards, and chat. Rob Rickard, Common World, P.O. Box 265, Wauzeka, WI 53826.

Wanted: Network Judges for GEN CON® Game Fair. The backbone of the Game Fair is the tournament program, but to have Network tournaments we need judges to run them. Network judges who run three or more slots pay only $10 for admission to the convention. We will consider only those willing to judge three or more slots. If you would like to help the Network by running games, fill out the Judge Appeal in this issue and send it to: RPGA Network Judge Appeal, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI, 53147.

The GEN CON® Game Fair Presents

Science Fiction Saturday

Featuring STAR TREK

Celebrity Guests of Honor

&

John de Lancie "Q"

Majel Barrett "Lwaxana Troi"

Saturday, August 20, 1994
9AM — 10PM
MECCA Convention Center
Milwaukee, WI

Other Guests

- STAR TREK author **Peter David**
- STAR WARS author **Timothy Zahn***
- BATTLETECH author **Michael Stackpole**
- STAR TREK author **Gene DeWeese**

Special Events

- Charity dinner with celebrity guests
- Celebrity question & answer sessions
- Memorabilia dealers
- Virtual Reality games
- Free alien makeup sessions
- SF movie props and other exhibits
- Klingon Charity Jail 'n' Bail
- Much more!

One-Day Admission – $10

For more information, write to:
Science Fiction Saturday
c/o TSR, Inc.
P.O. Box 756
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

*Timothy Zahn appears courtesy of West End Games.
GEN CON is a registered trademark of TSR, Inc. STAR TREK and all related marks are trademarks of Paramount Pictures. STAR WARS is a registered trademark of Lucasfilm, Ltd.
BATTLETECH is a registered trademark of FASA Corp. Guest appearances subject to change without notice. © 1994 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Cult of A0

Continued from page 14

population centers; at last notice, the two agents simply took the money and fled. The PCs are assigned the job of tracking the two rogues down, recovering the funds, and distributing funds as originally planned.

* Several members of the Cult are deadlocked about the current rise in Tyr worshippers within Waterdeep and their growing movement to right the wrongs of the Realms. Tyr's power is growing out of balance with other gods along the Sword Coast, and to counter this, current plans stand to aid some minor Cyricist movements within Waterdeep and Luskan (such as sink a number of supply and passenger vessels for a Tyrite foray south to Calimshan and the Shaar).

* Ewsav Lection, from his views of seeing Ao, believes Helm to be Ao's main agent among the gods of the Realms. He would like to unite more Helm worshippers into the cult and make it a better organized and more powerful force to implement Ao's will and punishment. This plan is done without Touras' knowledge, and Ewsav wants the PCs to work with him in infiltrating the ranks at the Hall of Heroes in Waterdeep to gain soldiers for Ao.

* The lone agent of the Cult around the Moonsea was killed six months ago by Zhentarim. Touras hopes to reestablish a Cult presence in that area both to bolster the good gods in opposition to Cyric and covertly to aid in rebuilding some organized faith of Cyric.

❑

Living City

Continued from page 22

PCs studying there has learned information about a band of Zhentarim wizards and a beholder. This PC is the "one" Paul and Dulanin have been looking for. The PC will be called upon to lead the paladin and dwarf to the Zhentarim. The player characters could be asked to accompany the pair on their quest of vengeance. The journey will be long and fraught with danger, and the PCs will be called upon again and again to help save the day.

A second story involves one or more PCs learning the true identity of Paul—a discovery that alerts Zhentarim agents in Ravens Bluff. The agents send a team of assassins to take care of the PCs and the paladin and dwarf.

Third, an evil wyrm angered over the death of so many of its brethren at the hands of Paul and Dulanin has decided to seek out the pair. Using magic, it appears as a Ravens Bluff citizen, and it stalks them waiting for the time to strike. The PCs will be called upon to assist Paul and Dulanin, who have a feeling someone is spying on them. The final battle with the dragon will be awesome and deadly, with the PCs and the paladin and dwarf using all of their combat skills to stay alive.

❑

Into the Dark

Continued from page 25

Moon director Manoogian (*Demonic* Toys and *The Dungeonmaster,* among other assaults on the video-watching public) tips his hand on that little secret pretty early in the film, when someone discovers a mutant, goop-spewing plant that vomits on the infortunate slob in slow motion.

As with most Full Moon productions, *Seedpeople* features a handful of poorly defined characters, played with little conviction. Cheap filler abounds, as folks drive, drive, drive across "scenic" Comet Valley. The budget was obviously blown on the creature effects. A few decent sequences stand out—like the scene where someone transforms into a seed-thing as he's being filmed—but this might be due more to the rest of the film's weakness than any real cinematic merit.

Someone should have let the folks at Full Moon know that true fans of the 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* really hate the lame-o framing sequence, because they aped the film so closely that they included one of their own. To their credit, they did add a new twist ending to the plot (predictable, yes, but at least it was different).

Yet again, I am totally astounded that Full Moon remains in business, pumping out junk like this, film after film. Are any of you renting these direct-to-Blockbuster wonders and actually enjoying them? Drop me a line if you are, 'cause I think I must be missing something.

❑

Cruise Con

April 27-30, 1995

"The Ultimate Role-Playing Experience"

Guest of Honor: Jean Rabe - RPGA® Director

RPGA is a trademark owned by TSR, Inc.